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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes and compares four studies of reader response reported between 1975 and 1978. The studies include (1) "Five Readers Reading," by Norman Holland; (2) "Individual and Group Responses of Fourteen- and Fifteen-Year Olds," by Anthony Petrosky; (3) "Describing Responses to Works of Fiction," by Lee Odell and Charles R. Cooper; and (4) "Subjective Criticism," by David Bleich. The report is comprised of six main divisions: an introduction, a chapter on each of the four metareading studies, and a summary chapter in which the conclusions about the differences and similarities among these studies and the state of response research in general are reached. The four chapters in which the investigations are presented each contain descriptions of the following aspects of the studies: scope or intent, structure, methods and procedures, theoretical approaches, and conclusions. (HOD)

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FOUR STUDIES OF LITERARY RESPONSE:
INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE OF READER SUBJECTIVITY

by

Deborah F. Rubin

A master's paper submitted to the faculty
of the School of Library Science of the
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science in
Library Science

Chapel Hill
December, 1981

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This presentation is a summary and comparison of four studies of reader response reported between 1975 and 1978. The comparison was done to identify the different approaches which researchers have taken toward analyzing the phenomenon of variation in reader reaction and to determine the progress which has been made in describing and explaining uniqueness in the responses of individual subjects to fiction. The relevance of these studies to the practice of librarianship is also considered.

The authors of these studies have succeeded in isolating the major determinants of reader individuality and have explored the use of the case study in investigating response. Two of the researchers have proposed theoretical models of the reading process. The emotional component of response is not as well understood as the intellectual and may provide a focus for future study.

Heading:

Reading--Psychological aspects

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I. INTRODUCTION

> The present attempt to reconstruct the process of response to fiction is likely to resemble one of those crude early maps which exaggerate the dimensions of certain territories, underestimate others, describe some geographic features mistakenly and omit others of considerable significance. However, even a map which shows what is now known, or can be conjectured, is not to be despised. If it is accurate in broad outline, it may be helpful to later explorers.[1]
>
> Simon O. Lesser, 1957

Although the effort to understand the process of reader response is still in its infancy in the 1980s, considerable progress has been made since Simon O. Lesser, author of Fiction and the Unconscious, wrote this assessment of his ground-breaking attempt to describe and explain the reading experience. During the last quarter century the inquiry into why people react as they do to what they read and how their unique thoughts and feelings influence their literary judgments has been pursued most actively and fruitfully by a small number of educators concerned with the teaching of literature. These investigators have generated a body of research which provides a history of modern thinking about reader response and constitutes a review of the insights which have been reached about this elusive phenomenon.

This presentation is a descriptive summary and comparison of the "maps" of the reading process which five investigators of the late 1970s have left for future "explorers" in this area. Through examination of these studies and their historic context, it is hoped that a partial record of "what is now known, or can be conjectured" about the subjective reading experience of individuals can be established. It is also hoped that familiarity with the questions raised and conclusions reached by these investigators will give the librarian deeper insight into the interrelated phenomena of reader taste and the selective use of library materials.

Relevance to Librarians

What these studies reveal about the state of the quest to describe and explain reader response is of vital concern to professionals whose theoretical understanding of the reading process in general or of individual readers in particular underlies their exercise of professional judgment in day to day practice. Teachers, librarians and reading specialists belong to this group. It can be argued that one index of professionalism is the degree to which the practitioner's actions are informed by the body of knowledge or theory ascribed to his specific profession. This analysis of studies of reader response is relevant to librarians precisely because as professionals they must be aware of historic and current thinking about reading, the very activity which libraries as we know them were created to support. The hypotheses presented in this discussion of the studies can at the very least give the librarian the basic tools to become more aware of his own heretofore unnoticed personal motives in carrying out materials selection or reader guidance as well as encourage him to approach the reactions of his patrons to library materials in a more probing, sensitive and professional manner.

Like journalists and those working in the electronic media, librarians are also in the business of communication and, quite legitimately, entertainment. The understanding of audiences is as important for the librarian as it is for the television producer or the magazine editor because although the librarian is not "selling" the print and non-print library materials for profit, he still strives to maximize their use. Knowledge about why people read and what uses human beings make of what other human beings write (or video-tape or record) lies within the purview of librarianship. In this age when some fear for the very survival of the print medium, it is especially critical for the librarian to know the characteristics of the reading experience and be aware of how reading is like other esthetic experiences, how it is unique, and how each individual reader experiences it differently.

It should be mentioned at this point that although the author of this presentation is in philosophical agreement with the American Library Association's position against the use of sexist language, male first person singular pronouns appear throughout this discussion in sentences where alternative formulations are esthetically less desirable or distracting. The decision to maintain traditional pronoun usage was made in the interest of the stylistic integrity of this presentation after attempts to avoid such usage resulted in inexact meanings and/or cumbersome constructions.

Identification of the Studies and Purpose

The four studies of reader response chosen for in-depth analysis here are: (1) the classic *5 Readers Reading* by Norman Holland (1975) which is based on Freudian psychoanalytic theory and provides a background for the other studies; (2) "Individual and Group Responses of Fourteen and Fifteen Year Olds to Short Stories, Novels, Poems, and Thematic Apperception Tests: Case Studies Based on Piagetian Genetic Epistemology and Freudian Psychoanalytic Ego Psychology" by Anthony Petrosky (1975), an unpublished dissertation which describes the combined use of Holland's approach with a method of analysis drawn from Piaget's theories of intellectual development; (3) "Describing Responses to Works of Fiction," by Lee Odell and Charles Cooper (1976), an article reporting a method for identification of one reader's "intellectual strategies" through use of a quantified content analysis scheme; and (4) *Subjective*

Criticism by David Bleich (1978) in which the epistemological assumptions underlying the work of previous investigators are challenged and a new, detailed method for analyzing response is proposed. This presentation focuses on what the scope, structure, methods, theoretical approaches and conclusions of these studies reveal about the current state of research into response and what the comparison between them implies about the possible directions of future research. As will be explained later in this chapter, all of these studies were selected for discussion here because in them the reading experiences of single individuals are examined through a method called "meta-reading" which is defined in the following section.

Meta-reading

Traditionally the study of literature has taken the form of criticism, or interpretation and evaluation of texts. In turn, the body of writing done by critics over the years has itself become the object of study for scholars concerned with the history of criticism. What distinguishes the critical historian from the critic is that the former focuses on what a given critic has written about a text, while the latter focuses on the text itself. A more recent extension of this shift in emphasis by the critical historian from study of the text to study of what the reader has said about the text is the study of the reader himself and how he synthesizes a novel, short story, or poem in his mind from a myriad of black marks on a page. The monumental challenge of this newest area of investigation, then, is to explain how the reader "creates" the literature from the page, as well as how and why readers typically differ from each other in the way they interpret, judge and react to a given text.

Another set of questions for the researcher is also raised by the hypothesis that one reader experiences the same text at least slightly differently each time he or she reads it, whether the readings are separated by minutes or years. The investigator of reader response does not look at the text or the reader in isolation, but at a particular reading of a text. In an article appearing in 1979, Susan Galenbeck calls this study of readings "meta-reading,"[2] a handy expression which will be borrowed for use in this presentation and extended slightly to mean the study of both readings and reading experiences. As used here the term includes the idea that a reading experience of a text is the product of many subtle, constantly changing variables and cannot, therefore, ever be exactly replicated. To varying degrees, the four main investigations examined in this presentation are done by "meta-readers," those interested in the subtle details of a particular response recorded at a particular time.

Challenges of Studying the Reading Process

The reading process is so complex with all its physical, psychological, emotional and intellectual dimensions, that only a small, well-defined aspect of it can be studied at a time. Equal to its complexity are the lightening speed with which the process takes place and the fragile, ephemeral quality of the immediate reading experience. Because this is the nature of reading, response analysts search for ways to freeze and capture the fleeting seconds of intense but largely invisible activity and sort out the tangle of functions that constitute perception, comprehension and reaction. The meta-reader must also deal with the "black box" phenomenon--the inaccessibility of the reader's thoughts and feelings as reading is taking place. The investigator must depend on the reader to share all the aspects of his response that he is aware of and is willing and able to express. As the prominent reading researchers Alan C. Purves and Richard Beach put it, " . . . differences in the ability to respond might well be differences in the ability to express oneself about one's response . . . "[3]

After the investigator has overcome some of the obstacles imposed by the response situation, he is faced with yet more considerations and decisions. There is the question of what happens to the raw response when it is packaged for delivery by the reader to the investigator. What effects will the relationship between the reader and the investigator have on what the reader reports? Further, should the subject be asked to answer specific questions about the text or to respond freely; and how will the reader's expressed response be influenced by the form in which it is recorded (e.g. as a written essay or tape)?

Other important factors are whether the reader has discussed the text with other readers and whether he has ever read the text before. And what about the part of response the reader is not aware of--the unconscious aspects underlying that which he recognizes and presents as his reading experience? Some meta-readers venture even into this speculative realm with fascinating and impressive results. Finally, once the data are collected and the expressed response carefully preserved, the investigator will read the written essays or transcribed tapes with his own idiosyncratic emotional and intellectual reactions set against the background of his own unique reading of the text to which the subject is reacting.

Although fraught with all these subtle difficulties and questions, valuable meta-reading can be done by sensitive and meticulous investigators who operate with the fullest possible awareness of the complexity of the reading process and an appreciation for the challenges to be met in the gathering and interpretation of response data. In this presentation of the work of five such responsible investigators, comparison will be made among the ways these meta-readers approach the following major components of the study of response: the reader, the text, the expressed response, the response situation and the investigator as a subjective human being.

Pioneers of Response Research

In her revolutionary book Literature as Exploration (1938), Louise Rosenblatt expresses the fundamental insights which underlie present response research. She is the theorist most commonly credited with recognizing "the need to differentiate between the text, the sequence of printed or voiced symbols, and the literary work (the poem, the novel, etc.), which results from the conjunction of a reader and a text."[4] She also identifies some variables of response and gives expression to the transitoriness and delicacy of the reading experience when she writes:

> The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine his response to the particular contribution of the text.[5]

At a time when English teachers and their students were preoccupied with what the author was saying, Rosenblatt shifted her attention to the individual experiencing the author's text in a unique and personal way. David Bleich, one of the meta-readers whose study will be examined in depth, views Rosenblatt's ideas as the basis of his own reader oriented research.[6] Among many others, Alan C.

Purves and Richard Beach, authors of Literature and the Reader, also identify her work as the source from which later response research was to develop.[7]

Another more widely known figure frequently cited as a significant contributor to response research is I. A. Richards, the famous critic, educator and writer. In his book Practical Criticism (1929) Richards reports the findings he made when he analyzed the "written responses of university students to thirteen poems"[8] with the purposes of discovering the reasons for misinterpretations of the poems and identifying the "principal difficulties"[9] these students experienced in understanding what they read. He delineated such obstacles to comprehension as "Misunderstanding of the imagery" or "The misleading effect of erratic associations and stereotyped reponses."[10] Perhaps even more important than Richards' conclusions to the overall development of response research is the fact that he used the case study method. Richards chose to analyze the essays of individual students rather than theorize in the abstract. As the work of later researchers is described, the importance of both experimentation with readers themselves and development of theory will be demonstrated.

Simon O. Lesser, the author of the statement with which this presentation begins, is the first well-recognized response theorist to use Freudian theory to penetrate some of the mysteries of the reading process. Unlike Richards or Rosenblatt, Lesser compares the reading experience to that of dreaming or fantasizing, and explains the perception of fiction in terms of psychological functions like objectification, projection and identification.[11] His greatest contribution is the concept that it is the needs of the unconscious mind that are most satisfied through reading. He describes the reading of fiction as a means of releasing and exercising repressed unconscious impulses in a safe or nonanxiety-provoking way which is acceptable or unnoticed by the conscious mind. Further, he outlines in some detail the different roles of the conscious and unconscious sides of personality in the reading process.

According to Lesser, the reader's unconscious mind: (1) apprehends painful or anxiety-provoking associations, (2) distorts perception and memory of story elements that hit a psychic "sore spot" and prevents them from registering on the conscious mind, (3) "draws inferences and establishes connections; . . . synthesizes its observations," (4) participates in the story, and (5) "analogizes" or creates parallel stories involving the reader himself.[12] The conscious mind, on the other hand, (1) follows the story, (2) evaluates the story's verisimilitude, personal relevance and style, and (3) places the story in relation to a reference point, e.g. time period or other books by the same author.[13]

Beyond applying the idea of the unconscious to literary experience, Lesser also extrapolates the Freudian concept of pleasure as a reduction of tension between warring personality parts to describe the reasons for the enjoyment of fiction:

> . . . we may say that fiction heeds the demands of both the reality principle and the pleasure principle, or that it provides a forum in which the positions of the id, the ego and the superego all receive a hearing.[14]

For Lesser, the formation of positive critical judgments is dependent on the success with which the tensions in the reader's personality are reduced by the work at hand. As a result, " . . . we reserve our highest praise for those works of fiction which satisfy and balance the needs of the entire personality."[15] This view is certainly a revolutionary, even shocking, departure from the then and perhaps still commonly held assumption that one evaluates fiction solely on the basis of the author's skill in writing it.

Lesser not only introduces new ways of thinking about the reader, but he also paints a previously unimagined picture of the text. He conceives of the form and style of a text as providing a defense or protection for the reader against psychic material touched on in the story which is too anxiety-provoking for the reader to deal with directly. The author's words distract the reader's conscious mind, involving it in the functions delineated earlier, giving the unconscious mind an opportunity to deal with conflicts and release desires which are touched on in a weakened or diluted and slightly removed form by the fiction. Thus, the unbearable anxiety that would normally be caused by facing these conflicts and desires is rendered bearable and manageable by the text in its function as a distractor and defender of the reader. Psychic material that would be overwhelming for the conscious mind if faced in reality, then, becomes palatable, indeed engaging when confronted in a fictional setting, tamed by the form and style the author created. As will be seen later, this concept of literature as both a mild tension producer and tension releaser (which is more than slightly reminiscent of the Aristotelian concept of catharsis) is an important one for Norman Holland, the Freudian theorist whose work will be discussed in detail. Lesser's analyses of fictional plots for the hidden fantasies imbedded in them of which the reader is unaware but to which he is unconsciously reacting also foreshadows the work of Holland.

Studies Done Since the 1920s

Since the 1920s several kinds of studies have been done in the area of response research. Most of the studies involve relatively large numbers of subjects, and the investigators use statistical methods to analyze the data (although it is not uncommon for these investigators to isolate a small number of subjects for case study as well). In this section based on a comprehensive survey of response research by Purves and Beach[16] some of the work done in response research will be summarized briefly as a backdrop for the four investigations selected for in-depth analysis. Although the studies described here are grouped loosely into types, there is much overlap among the categories.

Between 1925 and 1968 twelve studies were done which are similar to that of I. A. Richards. The intent of these studies is to diagnose the problems students experience in comprehending literature. James R. Squire is one of the more prominent investigators to identify some of these problems as well as examine some other questions in a study he reported for the National Council of Teachers of English in 1964. Two of the reasons he gives for miscomprehension of literature by a selected subgroup of his fifty-two subjects are "happiness binding"[17] or the insistence on finding a positive or happy interpretation of the story and "confusions resulting from the association of elements in a story with memories of fiction, motion pictures, radio and television."[18] He also reports that

> An adolescent's reaction to literature which involves problems similar to his own cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty. Case studies conducted as part of this research indicated that intense emotional involvement of some readers may be so painful as to cause them to reject the . . . [text]. The affective impulses of others may encourage distorted interpretation.[19]

This observation is particularly interesting because it seems to give practical confirmation to one of Lesser's theoretical propositions about the previously mentioned functions of the unconscious mind as a protector of psychic "sore spots" during reading.

Another group of studies focuses on the "factors in rating or judging" and investigates "the premises of taste." Into this category come two kinds of investigations, those that compare the reactions of professional or expert readers with responses of students or nonexpert readers and those which focus on the "reasons students give for judgments they make."[20] A typical conclusion of the latter kind of study is: "Younger children's taste is more erratic than that of older children; younger children tend to prefer the sentimental or the comprehensible to the 'true' version of a poem."[21] Purves and Beach place over ten studies in this major category and comment that " . . . research has not probed the premises of taste too deeply."[22]

The next category is formed largely on the basis of the method used by the investigators and contains the majority of the studies which have been done. Typically investigators in this group collect taped or written responses from a large sample group and employ a content analysis scheme of some sort to measure the frequency with which various identifiable statement types appear in the responses. These studies generate such data as the absolute number of times a particular statement type is used and what percentage of the total statements fall into each category. Purves and Beach call these investigations the "studies of the factors of stated responses" because possible correlation between variables like sex or reading ability can be explored, as can patterns with which respondents use various statement types.

James R. Squire, whose study was mentioned on p. 14 (above) in connection with investigations into mistakes in comprehension, employs a statement classification scheme of seven categories[23] to establish that sex differences do not correlate with patterns in statement type use. Another interesting finding reported by Squire as a result of earlier work is that the percent of "literary judgment" statements made by twenty-five girls and twenty-five boys do not show any significant relationship to the scores they received on personality tests.[24] Squire's data also enables him to challenge an idea commonly held by educators and students when he reports that:

> . . . the high coefficient of correlation between literary judgment and self-involvement [statements] in this study calls into question the tendency to assume an unnecessary opposition between intellectual and emotional responses to literature. An examination of individual transcripts and of the 13 case studies suggests the following hypothesis: that readers who become strongly involved emotionally in a story tend, either while reading or more frequently at the end of reading a selection, to analyze the elements in a story which give rise to their involvement.[25]

This correlation is a particularly significant one because of its possible implications for classroom practice. In another content analysis study done in 1969, Charles Cooper concludes through statement classification that respondents with greater reading ability tend to make interpretive statements about what they read while poorer readers tend simply to make evaluative or judgmental statements about the text[26]--an insight which may also be of value to teachers.

A critically important question addressed by some of these content analysis studies concerns whether individual respondents use a consistent pattern of statement type over several responses to different texts. Squire found that " . . . the percentages of a reader's responses coded in the different categories tend to be reasonably consistent from story to story for those types of reactions which occur most frequently (interpretational and narrational responses, literary judgments, reactions indicating self-involvement)."[27] In his 1969 study of 117 eleventh graders,[28] Charles Cooper found that three-fourths of his subjects have a "preferred way of responding."[29] Although this finding is corroborated by at least two other studies done in 1973,[30] it is refuted in one of the most ambitious response investigations ever undertaken. This large-scale study involves over five thousand school children from ten countries[31] and contains the conclusion "that individuals do not seem to have a consistent way of responding, but that national groups do."[32] The approach to and conclusions about the question of consistency in individual response offered by these numerically oriented studies become even more interesting when they are considered along with those of the psychological theorists who, as will be seen later, address the issue of consistency in relation to reader personality. These statement classification studies also provide an interesting contrast to the third investigation analyzed in detail here in which a numerical content analysis system is employed within a case study framework.

Purves and Beach refer to another set of investigations as "studies of preconceptions and their effect on response." In 1966 Fehl L. Shirley, one investigator whose study falls into this category, identifies seven types of respondents: "the indifferent, the observer, the partial participator, the intense participator, the self-image synthesizer, the construct synthesizer, and the decision maker."[33] Leo O. Thayer and N. H. Pronko made this observation concerning preconceptions as a result of studies done in 1958 and 1959: " . . . readers will ascribe to liked characters traits and attitudes considered likeable, regardless of whether the author portrays those traits."[34]

Under the rubric of "studies of the process of response" fall such theoretical works as that of Simon O. Lesser which has already been described in some detail. Holland's investigation is also a part of this group as is the work of Wolfgang Iser, author of The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response (1978) who has challenged Holland's approach and who presents an elaborate phenomenological theory based on the idea that every text is filled with "gaps" or omitted information which the reader fills in with his own experience, thus causing interaction between the reader's memories and associations and the form of the work.[35] Along with these theoretical studies, Purves and Beach place investigations which measure the physical manifestations of emotion in readers. In one study done in 1967, for example, a researcher examines the "relation between metaphor and galvanic skin repsonses" and in another done as early as 1949 "a relation between muscle activity and types of poems read aloud"[36] was found.

Although not mentioned as a separate group by Purves and Beach, there are also studies of the effects of group interaction on the responses of individuals. Two examples are Richard Beach's "The Literary Response Process of College Students While Reading and Discussing Three Poems" and Anthony Petrosky's investigation which is examined in this presentation. David Bleich also discusses the role of group consensus in the response process in Subjective Criticism. Other studies of reading further removed from meta-reading include investigations into whether literature changes reader attitudes and feelings (e.g. the classic What Reading Does to People [1940] by Waples, Berelson and Bradshaw), inquiries into the uses of reading in the treatment of the emotionally disturbed, and examination of the factors involved in literary learning.[37]

A data gathering method which has not yet inspired a new genre of studies but which is of great value in meta-reading is the "breakage method."[38] This approach involves interruption of the subjects at specified points in the text to catch "reactions which occur during the process of reading a story as well as those which occur when the reading has been completed."[39] By using this method Squire made the discovery that " . . . the literary judgments occur early in responding or after the reading of a story is completed, but they decline perceptibly while the reader is emotionally involved in the central features of the story and while he seems to suspend his objectivity and his tendency to pass judgment."[40] It is when a descriptive finding like this is related to a theoretical construct like Lesser's ideas about the roles of the conscious and unconscious minds in reading (or Coleridge's observation about the willing suspension of disbelief) that new explanatory insights are reached.

There has also been a study in which subjects read the same text fourteen times which yields some ideas about the development of a response over a two-hour period.[41] Both the successive reading technique and the breakage method have promise as valuable tools for future meta-readers.

Scope and Limitations of Response Studies

With the exception of some theoretical studies, most of the work done in reading research focuses on the intellectual aspect of response, addressing the question of what the subject thinks rather than what he feels during the reading experience. It is understandable, of course, that experimenters in response, like their scientific counterparts, deal with the measurable--with statements of different types, variables like age or scores on standardized tests and physical indicators of reaction like muscle tension. Through their measurements and quantifications these researchers have been able to discover quite a bit about the kinds of thoughts readers typically have about what they have read, and investigators like Squire have been able to establish how thought patterns develop during a given reading experience. Those who analyze response through the use of numbers have recorded the average percentage of statements different groups of readers make about the feelings they had while reading, but the content of these statements is noted only as a means for classifying the statement, not as a means for explaining it. In other words, response studies commonly center on thoughts made tangible through words and do not and often cannot delve into the emotional aspects of response by virtue of the form many of these studies take.

As was just hinted in the foregoing paragraph, many response studies have generated data which describe the reading phenomenon, but have offered very few explanations for the process. In all fairness it should be recognized, however, that there is often a grey area between description and explanation (as there is between thought and feeling), and it is difficult at times to distinguish between the two. (Whether Einstein's theory of relativity is a description of the physical universe or an explanation for how it works, for example, is a philosophical question on which one could spend much time and energy without reaching a satisfactory conclusion.) Yet, in the case of response research, it is safe to say that at best most studies only skim the surface of the complex, delicate and highly unique experience of the individual reader. Even investigations containing small numbers of case studies commonly provide information about how the general process works but not why it works that way for a given individual at a given moment. This is the difference between traditional response research and meta-reading as it was defined earlier.

Meta-Reading and Traditional Research

As a result of the differences just mentioned between traditional response research and meta-reading, meta-readers have abandoned some of the conventional techniques and have moved away from the judgmental approach that some investigators in the past (including

I. A. Richards) have taken toward their subjects' responses. Over-concern with the rightness and wrongness of responses is inimical to the necessary view of response as the manifestation of a reading experience, worthy of serious study no matter how inaccurate or shallow it may be as literary criticism or how substandard as a piece of writing or example of speech. That is not to say that inaccuracies and misinterpretations are to be ignored, indeed, they are important features of the response which must be noted and analyzed. But the investigator who reduces response research to an exercise in mistake identification has turned his attention away from the main purposes of meta-reading.

Implicit in the term meta-reading as it is used here is the idea of in-depth analysis of the response of a single individual--a level of depth which is not compatible with the demands of processing a large number of responses. Most of the studies which were done in the 1960s and early 1970s have sample sizes of over thirty[42] and offer findings about general tendencies of groups rather than conclusions about a single reader. The psychological theorist, Simon Lesser, was also interested in central tendencies when he defined his purpose by writing: "All we are after is knowledge of the kinds of reactions which occur; . . . " and not "individual variations in response."[43] Considering these divergent goals, it is easy to understand why meta-readers have broken with past techniques by adopting a case study format, a less judgmental approach and a method of data analysis more conducive to their purpose.

On the issue of the relative importance of data about central tendencies and data about individual readers, Alan Purves makes the well-taken point that investigations of both kinds are needed and that findings of either kind of study become meaningful only in light of the findings of the other:

> One cannot examine variation except in reference to a central tendency; one cannot regard the individual except in relation to the group, nor the group except in relation to the individual. One response by one individual to one text in one situation tells us little; it is an isomorph. There must be a second response, a second person, a second text, a second situation--even a third--in order for a pattern to emerge. It has become fashionable of late to do the case study; the glamour of the anthropologist or the psychiatrist has replaced that of the sociologist. But the case study of a reader is only effective when it is performed against a larger backdrop of many readers. The backdrop only comes to make sense when it is tested against the individual case. Similarly, significance [of a text to an individual reader] can only be seen against the backdrop of meaning, as Richards demonstrated, and private emotional significance against the central emotional tenor of the text. The tension between centrality and diversity that exists in a theory of literary response must also inform research into that response.[44]

Although one may question his characterization of the current leaning toward use of the case study as no more than a bow to fashion or bid for glamor, Purves quite rightly suggests that only through the taking of multiple meta-readings will response patterns be discovered and will the single response be understood in turn.

The Case Study

Although Purves ostensibly minimizes the value of the case study method in the preceding statement written in 1979, in 1972 he and Richard Beach ended their landmark summary of response research by predicting that:

> The next direction in research, . . . might well be exploration into the complex system of literary response. Such exploration might well employ the case-study technique of exploring many aspects of the responses of a few individuals. [The statement continues, however, with the recommendation that] This technique should be combined with multivariate analysis, multidimensional scaling, partition analysis, and other more sophisticated statistical treatments."[45]

With this qualification, the position taken in 1972 is essentially the same as the one taken in Purves' later remarks.

The Purves and Beach prediction has proven correct as researcher after researcher has abandoned the large-sample, quantified data analysis structure as inadequate for probing the depths of the reading process. In 1976 Charles Cooper, co-author of one of the meta-reading studies described here, wrote:

> As a methodology I strongly recommend the increased use of case studies. The case study is ideally suited to exploration in an area of ignorance or uncertainty. It has a long and respected history in psychology and the social sciences and a well-defined, though flexible, methodology. The case study seems ideally suited to studying a complex, subjective process like response to literature. I am convinced that behavioral research models have impeded progress in this area. When we know more

> about the process of response, then perhaps we can state narrower and more precise hypotheses and devise measures which will yield useful quantifiable data.[46]

It comes as no surprise that the other three investigators whose work is examined in depth in this presentation all support the case study approach and express varying degrees of frustration with the traditional paradigms. Consistent with the point made earlier about the tendency of quantified response studies to describe rather than explain, Norman Holland says of the body of reading research: "Instead of coherent research, one finds random observations. What these studies may have gained in rigor they certainly lack in theory."[47] Anthony Petrosky observes that the case study is most appropriate for use in situations where the data analysis requires the exercise of judgment and fine discrimination as does research into reading: "The case report or case study is widely acknowledged to be one of the most effective means of reporting and analyzing qualitative data."[48] He also touches on an important feature of flexibility in the case study when he writes, " . . . it allows the researcher to avoid taxonomies, but yet allows for the application of taxonomies."[49] David Bleich, the most vehement of the group about the shortcomings of traditional research protests that:

> . . . organized research tries to collect larger, more statistically significant groups of responses and studies them with more complex mathematical

> techniques. Yet if individual response is not governed by actuarial findings, such findings serve no purpose: a reader's unique questions cannot be answered with statistical knowledge.[50]

Perhaps an argument for the value of the case study equally as persuasive as the ones just cited is that an investigative approach should be suited to the phenomenon it is meant to study. As is implied in the statement by Charles Cooper, the unpredictable and individual nature of human perception, of which reading is one function, challenges response investigators to depart from the familiar models for research which come from the natural and behavioral sciences and conform to comfortable assumptions about the objective solidity of the physical universe. If the quest to learn more about subjective human experience is to succeed, it will not be through the use of techniques designed for the study of more tangible phenomena. Investigation into reader response can easily be bogged down by the weight of demands for objective proof in the scientific sense. The history of reading research suggests that methodological apparatuses constructed to produce hard data are far too rigid to allow for anything but the roughest adumbration of the outer contours of individual experience.

Quantification obviously has its place, but carries with it an unavoidable reductionism. The price for scientific neatness can be failure to explore the very heart of the process under study because emotions and associations cannot be captured, preserved or communicated through numbers. This difficult but not impossible task can only be accomplished through language and the thorough, careful analysis of the respondent's words by experienced investigators who also report their findings in words--words reflecting as closely as possible the subtleties and uniqueness of the phenomenon they are studying.

Methodology, Scope, Organization and Restatement of Purpose

The studies examined in depth here were selected from a large number of articles, dissertations and books which were located through specialized bibliographies of works on reader research and through automated or manual searching of the following indexes and data bases: ERIC, Education Index, Psychological Abstracts, MLA Bibliography, Library Literature and LISA. These particular studies were chosen because they are examples of what has been done with meta-reading in the late seventies by well recognized researchers. All the investigators who designed these studies:

1. use the case study method (a prerequisite for meta-reading);
2. not only theorize about reading to some degree, but also apply the theory through experimentation with actual readers;
3. accept the complex, delicate, changeable and largely unpredictable nature of response;
4. address the question of how different readers make meaning of a text;
5. attribute differences in reading responses of individuals to variations in affective

or cognitive functions or both;

6. accept the premise that readers are essentially unaware of why they respond to texts in a given manner although those readers may identify characteristics of the text as the primary cause of their responses;
7. are interested in the pedagogical implications of their conclusions.

Although the studies were picked because of the characteristics they share, they were also chosen because they are very different from each other in intent, scope, structure, methods and conclusions. The legitimacy and value of each of the four different approaches described here is a reflection of the complexity of the reading process--a phenomenon which will be understood only through the employment of the many investigative approaches needed to touch on all its varied aspects.

Consistent with the nature of both the reading process and the four studies which examine it, the approach taken in this presentation to comparing and contrasting the investigations is not one of scientific precision, but one of sometimes delicate qualitative discrimination and appraisal based on the responsible exercise of judgment. Many of the ideas presented in these studies are philosophically sophisticated and subject to interpretation. Where interpretation is called for it is done with careful consideration and the goal of maintaining fairness and accuracy. At times, there are apparent contradictions between the positions a given investigator takes in his explanation of theory and the experimental methods he uses. These contradictions are pointed out when they elucidate the differences and similarities among the studies or have implications for later research. Although the studies will be described in depth, enumeration of every inconsistency or confusing point within them falls outside the scope of this presentation.

Determination of which investigator is right and which one is wrong on any given point is also not the purpose of this paper. The assumption underlying the approach taken here is the same as that expressed by Leon Levy author of Psychological Interpretation:

> . . . the interpretation of an event is not a search for the true meaning of an event. Every event is subject to a vast range of interpretations. In psychological interpretation we apply the particular construction which we believe will best suit our purposes and which is consistent with the theoretical frame of reference we bring to the situtaion.[51]

All of the theoretical "constructions" offered by the investigators here are believed to be of value when considered within the "frame of reference" of each study and will be treated accordingly. Where one model of reading seems to offer a higher or deeper level of explanation or description than another, however, this discrimination will be made based on judgment. Rather than evaluation, then, the goal of this presentation is identification of the methodological and theoretical points of convergence and divergence among these studies with the intent of documenting the variety in approaches taken and conclusions reached by recent research into the experience of individual readers. It is hoped that the descriptive observations made here about the techniques and approaches of reading research will increase the librarian's theoretical understanding of reader response.

In terms of organization, this presentation is comprised of six main divisions including an introduction (of which this subdivision is a part), a chapter on each of the four meta-reading studies and a summary chapter in which the conclusions about the differences and similarities among these studies and the state of response research in general will be reached. The four chapters in which the investigations themselves are presented each contain descriptions of the following aspects of the studies: scope or intent, structure, methods and procedures, theoretical approaches, and conclusions. To facilitate discussion of the influence of earlier investigators on the work of later ones, the order in which these four chapters are presented reflects the order in which the studies being examined were completed or published.

The Subjective Approach

A noteworthy feature of several of these studies which makes their analysis particularly challenging is that at times every element of the response situation is represented as a variable. Since the text is reconstituted in the reader's mind, its transitory identity as literature is defined by the reader recreating it and, as was pointed out earlier, the reader as a human being is subject to continual alterations in his physical and mental state as he interacts with a complex, dynamic social, psychological and physical environment of which the text is only one small component. As if this were not bewildering enough, the investigator himself represents yet another variable as he processes the data through his own subjective emotional and physical perceptual system. This concept of reading and what it suggests about the nature of the tangible and intangible world can be so counter to common assumptions that the less flexible-minded may be tempted to reject it out of hand as ridiculous. Surely we do not live in a quicksilver reality so slippery that it defies all efforts to examine it and only oozes through our fingers more maddeningly the harder we tighten our grasp to clutch it. Or do we?

This extreme picture of text, reader, investigator and response situation melting into each other like so many skinless amoebas has been broadly drawn here purposely to establish one end of a continuum of philosophical stances on which these meta-readers will be located through the course of this presentation. The many questions raised by this view of reading about the significance of stable personality characteristics, the by-now almost forgotten author, and particularly about the subjective and objective reality of the text will be considered further although possibly not totally answered as this discussion progresses. The position taken from the outset, then, is that absolute answers to these questions mask the complexity of the issues themselves and, therefore, the conclusions offered in this presentation are more tentative and impressionistic than those reached through a classic experimental approach.

The idea of the subjectivity of any human investigator in the act of making qualitative distinctions has already been touched on and is brought up again here in recognition of the fact that this investigator is no exception. The existence of this omnipresent but often denied state of affairs in no way devalues a presentation of studies of meta-reading--a process which by definition rests on the recognition of subjectivity. This point is made to eliminate any lingering aura of scientific pretense and the constraints imposed by such pretense which may automatically surround this discussion by virtue of its presentation as a logical, responsible, serious and formal report.

Definition of Terms

Before the first study is described, one last word needs to be said about words themselves and the importance of the use of language by these meta-readers as an index to their differences and similarities. More often than not the philosophical assumptions underlying a given investigator's study are directly stated by him or can be inferred from the way he defines and subsequently uses such terms as "text" and "response" or common words like "thought" and "feeling". It is sometimes in the discrepancy between an investigator's overtly stated definition of these terms and his actual use of them that an inconsistency or area of confusion becomes manifest. It is also the slight but important change in the meaning of some of these terms from study to study which occasionally precludes the drawing of sharp distinctions among the approaches and theoretical assumptions of these investigators. The following list of definitions establishes the meanings attributed by this investigator to these frequently appearing words and is offered in an attempt to reduce confusions between their use in this presentation and their use and meaning in any of the four studies:

affect - a feeling or emotion which is either conscious or unconscious

affective - that which relates to the experience of emotions and feelings both conscious and unconscious, verbalized or unverbalized

cognitive - that which relates to thought or intellectual processes including deductive and inductive logic and conceptual absorption, synthesis, and extrapolation

connotation - the emotional content of words subjectively experienced as conscious and unconscious feelings evoked by associations, memories and fastasies

critical judgment - the direct or indirect evaluation or interpretation of a text

denotation - the generally agreed upon literal meaning of words (e.g. cat means a small furry four-legged mammal of the feline family)

expressed response - that part of the reader's thoughts and feelings evoked by a text of which he is aware and which he has chosen to verbalize and record either in writing, on tape, or through notes taken at an interview

holistic approach - a method of analysis based on the assumption that every action or reaction of a person (including his reading response) reflects his characteristic patterns of thought and feeling and is a manifestation of the larger whole called personality or identity

objective - an approach to perception which emphasizes the aspects of reality about which there is apparent consensus. This approach is based on absolutes and uninterpretable truths.

response - the total constellation of conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings which constitute the reading experience of the individual

response artifact - the physical form of an expressed response (a tape or written essay)

stage-specific - that which is characteristic of or associated with individuals of a particular age or developmental phase

subjective - an approach to perception which emphasizes the uniqueness of the individual's experience of reality and while not precluding the existence of shared perceptions and a stable physical universe, recognizes a reality as it is filtered through each individual's physical and psychological mechanism

taste - the capacity for and awareness of enjoyment or rejection of a text

text - a physical object consisting of a page or pages of words. "Text" also includes such generally

> agreed upon aspects of the work as setting, number of characters and basic plot elements which are inferred from the denotative value of the words. (Sometimes even basic plot elements are impossible to establish on the basis of denotation of words e.g. James's The Turn of the Screw.)

There will be other words coined or used idiosyncratically by the five investigators which will be defined as the studies are described.

II. NORMAN HOLLAND: 5 READERS READING

In 1975 Norman Holland, Professor of English and author of two earlier books about literary response, published the results of his ambitious "experiment" with reader reaction in his landmark book 5 Readers Reading. The central question which Holland addresses through his inquiry is: "How does the personality of the reader shape . . . [that individual's reading] experience?"[1] It was Holland's hope that the answer to this question would contain the key to the mystery of individuality or "subjectivity" in reaction to literature. Further, Holland set himself the goal of explaining why readers who share such characteristics as age, education level, general ability and subject interests often respond very differently to the same text.[2]

This early meta-reader strove to discover both the principles underlying the idiosyncratic reactions of individual readers as well as the universal dynamics governing the reaction patterns of all readers by collecting and analyzing the responses of five undergraduate English majors to "ten rather familiar stories of a few decades ago."[3] After recognizing the fruitlessness of his original plan to answer his questions through the

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use of scientific techniques (including the formation of "rigorous hypotheses", use of statistical "measurement" and data collection by objective "questionnaires"[4]), Holland decided to gather his data through weekly taped interviews with each subject which were transcribed for later analysis. Despite his abandonment of scientific methodology, Holland enlisted the aid of Joseph Masling, a psychological consultant, and two "experienced psychological testers" who administered Rorschach cards and Thematic Apperception Tests to the subjects. Holland, himself a trainee at the Boston Psychoanalytic Institute, also had his subjects answer the COPE questionnaire "designed to elicit [the students'] defense mechanisms."[5] The data from these tests were intended to balance the impressionistic opinions about the subjects' personalities which the investigator formed during the interviews. Before interviewing the students, Holland read the test results with the expectation that some of the same areas of psychological concern or thematic patterns which were manifested in a subject's responses to the tests would also be evident in that subject's reactions to literature as expressed during the personal meetings. It should be made clear, however, that the test results serve only as background material for the investigator's discussions with the subjects from which the central core of the data is taken.

Holland bases his approach to his subjects and the data he collected on the principles of Freudian psychoanalysis. As will be seen later, Freud's teachings color both Holland's data collection and analysis techniques as does the work of many diverse individuals like Chomsky, Locke, Erikson, Piaget, Malinowski, Whitehead and Langer, to mention just a few. From the father of psychoanalysis Holland borrows the integrative or holistic method through which an observer attempts to construct one cohesive explanation for a large number of obstensibly unrelated behaviors or psychological features presented by a subject over a given period (in this case during the experimental interview). In Holland's words:

> . . . one rates the success of a psychoanalyst's explanation qualitatively by the coherence, meaning, and convergence with which it interrelates the data. One also rates its explanatory power quantitatively by the amount of detailed behavior it interrelates and the directness of the connections it makes. A good psychoanalytic explanation must interrelate not just large categories of behavior but myriads of small details from many spheres of activity.[6]

Holland's objective, then, is the construction of a "formulable unity [for each subject] around which . . . all the details of the [individual's reading] experience [can be interrelated] . . ."[7]

As a Freudian, teacher and literary critic, Holland chose his subjects according to two criteria: (1) their reading tastes, and (2) because they seemed to be representative of a variety of such identifiable Freudian personality types as "oral", "anal" or "oedipal." All of the subjects volunteered to participate in the experiment and all preferred reading "writers whose works went beyond the ordinary reading lists of a literature curriculum but did not seem to be faddish or outré."[8] Four other important procedural features of Holland's experiment are that: (1) the subjects were given some monetary remuneration for their time, (2) they all knew when they were being taped, (3) they all knew the tape was transcribed, and most significantly, (4) they had no role in the analysis of the data Holland gathered about them.

Although Holland employs "Freudian taxonomies" (such personality classifications as "oral" or "phallic") in his subject selection process, he does not describe the responses he collected with these labels alone because they hide the very subtlety of detail in response through which individuality or subjectivity is expressed. Holland writes: "Evidently to deal with people's experience of literature we need something more individual than the traditional categories, even though they do reveal some convergences in personal dynamics."[9] Instead of reducing the responses of his subjects to Freudian categories, then, Holland concentrates on the words each reader used to describe his own reactions. It is in the subjects' use of the largely unpredictable, highly idiosyncratic medium of language that this proto-typical meta-reader looks for delicate patterns of individual response. As was mentioned at the outset, language is the investigator's primary means of access to his subjects' responses and Holland's work is based firmly on this fundamental insight. Not only does Holland focus on language, but he also understands that each subject has his own linguistic system. Although words must have a shared meaning to be useful in communication, they also carry for each of us a private cargo of conscious and unconscious associations and feelings. These personal associations and feelings are discoverable only through a specific effort to delve behind the surface denotation and general connotation of the word, all the way to its historic psychological significance for that unique individual. As Freud's follower and Bleich's predecessor, Holland deals with language on this level, with full awareness of the multi-layered significance of words.

Freud's influence is also evident in the way Holland conducted his interviews. True to psychoanalytic tradition, Holland strove to remain the neutral interviewer, never reacting with surprise or annoyance to his subjects and never implying there is a correct or preferable reading of a text. He also encouraged the respondents to associate freely to what they read:

> So long as a reader was talking fully and easily, it did not matter whether he was recalling his emotions correctly or even if he was disguising them or making them up to suit my professorial mien--free associations reveal the act of synthesis and creation behind them. The reader's words held what I was looking for.[10]

Although he gave his subjects the opportunity to express whatever they were willing to share during the interviews, he also stimulated them with open ended questions (e.g. How do you feel about the story?) and some substantive, standardized questions he had constructed for each text.[11]

Holland analyzes the pages of transcription he collected by extracting three kinds of "interrelated and overlapping" information from what the respondent said: (1) "likes and dislikes" of the reading selection, (2) unconscious "fantasy materials" revealed through the subject's wording and imagery, and (3) the individual's "adaptations" or interpretations of the selection as shown through what the subject emphasized, omitted or misinterpreted.[12] The last category of information is perhaps most significant because it contains clues to how the reader makes literature personally meaningful. By combining this relatively structured method of information categorization with the test results, Freudian insights and overall impressions of the subjects' personalities, Holland is able to make the following kinds of observations about his subjects from their responses to literature. (Assumed names are used for the subjects to guard their anonymity.)

> Sam's and Sandra's drives concern themes of strength and power, particularly as they relate to maleness and femaleness. Saul and Sebastian took pleasure in controlling their own inner creations, mental and physical, as against external authorities, while Shep showed strong aggressive drives associated with situations of food, talk, or dependency. You will see over and over again in their interviews traces of these phallic, anal, and oral modalities, but you will also see that these body-derived drives are far from fine enough to account for more than a small

part of what they said about the stories they read.[13]

The value of these observations in answering Holland's original question about the influence of personality on the reading experience and the dynamics of subjectivity will become apparent as his theory of response and his conclusions are described in detail.

Before Holland's philosophical approaches to the text and his actual response theory are described, a word needs to be said about the primary text with which he works. As was mentioned before, Holland's subjects read ten stories during the "experiment", but in 5 Readers Reading Holland focuses his analysis most heavily on the responses which he gathered to William Faulkner's bizarre and disturbing story "A Rose for Emily." Two other stories which the subjects read and which Holland deals with in some detail are F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams" and Ernest Hemingway's "The Battler". All three pieces were selected because they were not so familiar to the students as to elicit "stock responses" and because they are readily comprehensible. Also, according to Holland each story represents a different fantasy mode "in a psychoanalytic sense" (which will be elucidated later in the explanation of Faulkner's story) and therefore each subject was expected to react differently to each text.[14] During his discussion of responses to Faulkner's story Holland makes occasional references to responses evoked by these other two texts in order to illustrate "the sameness one reader brings to different stories and the difference different readers bring to the same story."[15]

The Nature of the Text

As was pointed out earlier, one distinguishing characteristic of different meta-readers is the degree to which each invests the text with an objective reality or sees it as an unstable, subjective entity that is synthesized differently by each reader. In other words, response researchers vary widely in the answers they would offer to the question, How much of literature is on the page and how much is in our heads? (Even the most radical theorist would be forced to concede, however, that a given text does not suddenly turn into a different identifiable literary work when passed from one reader to another.)

Another interesting dimension to this issue which will surface again in the discussion of Bleich's work concerns that venerable institution known as the "author's intent". This phrase along with the full weight of scholarly authority which it connotes is invoked regularly in literature classrooms with a reverence sometimes bordering on religious fanaticism and has been used by countless English teachers to refute distasteful student interpretations. In actuality, though, how relevant is what the author meant to say to what happens between the words on the page and the reader; and who is to determine what the "author's intent" really was? This aspect of the question will be touched on in chapter 5 in the section on the place and value of biographical criticism.

Holland's ideas about the objective reality of the text are somewhat confusing because his stated positions are not altogether consistent with his treatment of the texts in the experiment itself. Most of Holland's outright statements point toward a position of total subjectivity--a picture of the text as a variable, dependent for its existence on the subjective mind of each reader. The following quotation about professional readers or critics, for example, certainly carries the strong implication that the text cannot be experienced as an absolute constant:

> . . . no matter how deeply a critic might need to feel he is telling "objective" truths, it is not given to man to know things outside himself apart from his personal re-construction and synthesis of them.[16]

He states the case for a variable text more directly when he writes:

> The work begins in the psychological dynamics of its author, and the act of creating it fulfills those processes--for him. The work finds its fulfillment, so to speak, when a reader gives it life by re-creating the work in his own mind. The text as such almost vanishes in the astonishing variability of different readers' re-creation of it.
>
> [Taking the argument even further he continues,] Typically the dynamics in any given reader's mind will not coincide with the author's processes, nor

> will one reader's experience match another's, and even the same reader, we shall see, will respond differently at different times in his life.[17]

In the introduction to 5 Readers Reading Holland credits Bleich with aiding him to arrive at a subjective concept of the text which is actually quite similar to that of Louise Rosenblatt who is mentioned on p. 8 (above) as one of the pioneers of response research:

> David Bleich has done outstanding work in this field on which I have drawn. . . . He enabled me to make a transition I found extremely difficult: from a concept of reading as the reader's partaking partially of a process completely but potentially embodied in a text to reading as the reader's active re-creation of the text based on the materials he finds in it . . . [18]

Despite these passages, Holland overtly draws the line about subjectivity when he insists that a work can be perceived incorrectly. An example is his statement that the heroine of Faulkner's story, "A Rose for Emily", which is set in the post-Civil War South cannot correctly be pictured in the reader's mind as anything other than an Anglo-Saxon woman:

> . . . words can't be just anything. Miss Emily, we have noted, cannot be an Eskimo--at least not without doing violence to the text. The writer creates opportunities for projection but he also sets constraints on what the reader can or cannot project into the words-on-the page and how he can or cannot combine them. The reader can violate these stringencies, of course, but if he does so, he loses the possibility of sharing his reading with others . . . [19]

This point is hotly debated by Bleich and will be brought up again later as part of the contrast between these two meta-readers.

In the third paragraph of this section, it is mentioned that Holland's treatment of the text in the experiment itself is something less than consistent with his stated claims about the subjective nature of any text. This point is made because throughout his analysis of the respondents' reactions to the story, Holland often treats the story as a constant composed of themes and "fantasies" which he sees as legitimate components of the text and against which he interprets the reactions of the students. An example will be offered after the following description of what Holland sees as the salient features of the story.

Holland analyzes Faulkner's text according to the Freudian theory that emotional development is inextricably linked with an individual's experience of his own body. For Holland, every work of literature has an apparent or easily identifiable surface configuration which we would call plot and literary style underneath which lie the materials for less readily identifiable Freudian fantasies. These fantasies are both suggested by the story's surface structure (plot and style) and obscured by it, allowing the reader's mind to deal with significant psychological issues in a softened, disguised form. The reader unconsciously uses the materials in the story to construct a fantasy which is relevant to the central conflicts and preoccupations of his own psyche, thereby creating personal meaning out of the black marks on the page.

One possible fantasy which Holland sees lurking behind the surface of "A Rose for Emily" is an anal one dealing "with retention and elimination, with holding on and letting go, with shame and autonomy, control and will."[20] Although Holland presents this interpretation as only one possible way of seeing the story, his subsequent analyses of the subjects' responses is heavily colored by the fantasies he finds in "A Rose for Emily." This paragraph from Holland's analysis of one respondent's reactions is an example. (The respondent's words are in quotation marks and all brackets except the first set contain Holland's interpolations.)

> Repeatedly, . . . [the respondent] referred to Miss Emily in terms of the "end" or "behind" or leaving something behind. "She knew she was the end of the line." "The situation had, in a way, been inflated by her, her lastness, her finality [so] that the only event equal to it was what she did." "Homer Barron dead [was] kind of a monument behind for her and behind--you know, showing her triumph, monuments being, I suppose, designed to show the triumph against time." "At the beginning, she is a fallen monument." "The monumental aspect of roses [sic] is another one." Her own putrefaction, Homer's, and the opposite--the sweet, ephemeral perfume of roses--all make odorous monuments "behind" Miss Emily.[21]

Despite Holland's careful qualifications about his own subjectivity in interpreting the story and the variability in fantasies that can be synthesized from a text, then, in his discussion he invests this text (and the other two stories selected for their contrasting fantasy materials) with an emotional content that is more constant than his original statements about the subjectivity of the text would lead one to expect.

Theory of Literary Response

One of Holland's goals in interviewing his subjects was the formulation of a central descriptive profile for each individual which explains all the features of that reader's responses. To distill these profiles from the wealth of data he collected, Holland adopted the concept of the "identity theme" from the psychologist Heinz Lichtenstein. Quoting Lichtenstein and adding his own words in brackets, Holland explains that identity theme is arrived at by

> . . . abstracting an invariant from the mulititude of [bodily and behavioral transformations during the whole life of the individual]. This invariant, when perceived in our encounter with another individual, we describe as the individual's 'personality.'[22]

Freudian psychoanalysis, then, is not the only source of Holland's holistic approach.

For Holland, each individual's identity theme includes that person's characteristic defense mechanisms and fantasies, both crucial to the understanding of the individual's responses to literature.[23] Holland arrives at such a unifying concept for each of his subjects "by much the same process of successive abstraction as one uses to infer a centering theme in a literary work."[24] The following passage contains the identity themes which he formulated for his five subjects and illustrates how each theme describes the unconscious behavioral strategies and strivings which Holland sees in each person:

> Shep, as I see him, dealt with the world either by exile to a point where he could resume his fight or by hiding and becoming a thing in a system. Saul could draw close by means of a defined bargain with a defined adversary, or he would escape to a safe precision elsewhere. Sebastian sought out an exchange of his wit for fleshly dirt from some authority figure--or else he escaped by concentrating entirely on his own verbal or intellectual creations. Sam either fled into an isolated, boyish masculinity or sought out mutual admiration leading to a passive identification with a stronger male or asexual figure. Sandra could proceed through a sequence of seeing, touching, moving with, and drawing from a source of strength and nurture or she could flee to a different source.[25]

Initially Holland attempted to use the identity themes to predict the answers his subjects would give to the fixed questions he asked them, but he soon found out that the themes were not useful as indicators of future behavior. He writes, "I had to learn for myself what Freud had recognized and accepted a half-century before, that one cannot, in a truly psychoanalytic framework, predict."[26] Holland succeeds in showing, however, that the themes are very useful in understanding what these five readers saw in what they read.

> Saul's bargains, Sandra's sources, or Shep's systems serve both to ward off dangers and to secure gratification, and . . . [the readers] transform the stories they read into the bargains, sources and systems they desire."[27]

Seventy pages of 5 Readers Reading are devoted to the annotated transcribed responses to "A Rose for Emily" which Holland explicates with the aid of the identity themes.

The essence of Holland's theory is that the reader is stimulated by the author's words to create an unconscious fantasy consistent with his identity theme which is rendered pleasure giving because it is filtered through the defense mechanisms the reader finds in the form and content of the text. (This model of reading is highly reminiscent of the one described earlier which was originated by Holland's predecessor, Simon O. Lesser.) In order for a reader to find a work satisfying " . . . he must have synthesized from it all or part of his characteristic structure of defense or adaptation."[28] Only when the reader's defense strategies match up with ones in the text will the reader experience gratification through a fantasy and react to the work positively. Holland observes that " . . . when these five readers explain their value judgments, their perceptions of the text, even the most subtle and intellectual ones rest on their need to match defenses."[29] A simple example of this dynamic in action is Holland's suggestion that one of the respondents described the heroes in two stories contemptuously as "simple minded" because these characters do not employ one of the respondent's defense mechanisms which is intellectualizing.[30]

A more extended example of defense matching is Holland's use of his theoretical model to explain his sole female respondent's reactions to a story:

> In order to bring a reader's defenses and adaptations into play, he needs to perceive the thing he fears. For Sandra, for example, to bring a story into her world, her kind of experience, she must bring her adaptations into play. To do so, she

> must perceive the very overpowering she so much fears--then, and only then, can she construct defenses to manage it. From another point of view, however, that overpowering also makes up the power source that Sandra enjoys being close to. To gain pleasure, then, she must perceive the work in terms of power. To make it important or even real for her, she must project into it the kind of thing she both fears and wishes; that will enable her to use the work in her defenses and thus to accept it and enjoy the pleasure of being close to a squrce of power.[31]

Holland's theory can also be used as a tool for understanding what determines reader identification with literary characters as well as a reader's enjoyment or rejection of a work. The concept of defense matching is employed here, for example, to account for why a reader likes or dislikes a particular character or perhaps cannot become involved with the character at all:

> Identification simply does not take place on the basis of surface similarities between reader and literary character. Nothing in this study will support that idea or suggest that superficial resemblances of gender, age, culture, or class (in a Marxist sense, for example) have any important role in and of themselves in response. What counts are the deeper structures of adaptation and lifestyle. To be sure, surface similarities between a reader and a character may indicate a deeper psychological similarity and so may seem to provide a point for identification. Identification as such, however, takes place not because of external likenesses but because of an internal matching of adaptation and defense within a total dynamic of response. We identify when a certain character (or even milieu, as with Sam or Shep) enables us to achieve a close matching of our own defenses within a total re-creation of our psychological processes by means of a literary work. Then we, like Sandra, feel what the character feels.[32]

Holland also uses defense mechanisms and fantasy modes to explain misinterpretations and misperceptions his readers had of the text. One reader's mistaken recollection of knitting as having been the heroine's pastime in Faulkner's story instead of china-painting is seen by Holland as a substitution on the respondent's part of a phallic fantasy for an anal one rather than a chance misapprehension of no significance.

> Sam, much concerned with boyish virility, remembered china-painting as knitting, replacing any "symbolism" of smearing with an act of penetrating with a long, pointed object. He used--or misused--the story to create a fantasy at the level that mattered to him."[33]

Further inspection of the transcribed responses of this reader reveals that he also made several "slips and self-contradictions" in his discussion of "A Rose for Emily." For the investigator this blurring of memory is more than random forgetting, it represents a concrete manifestation of one of Sam's primary defense mechanisms, denial:

> Sam avoided seeing something he did not want to see by concentrating on something peripheral. As such, his denials use the way the story omits and slides over its clues so as to build toward the final, awful discovery. This shared denial, this matching of defenses, established Sam's basic and pervasive contact with the story.[34]

Holland hypothesizes, then, that these misreadings or inaccurate recollections of what was read are explicable through recognition of the psychological issues upon which the identity theme of this individual is built.

Affect, Cognition and Absorption

Rather than probing into the origins of an individual reader's feelings during the reading experience, Holland uses affect as an index to the success with which a reader matches his own defenses and fantasies with the material in a given work (positive feelings, successful match, negative feelings or noninvolvement, no match). Without focusing on shades of feeling like fear, anger or love which readers may experience, Holland limits his basic discussion of feeling in 5 Readers Reading to whether or not the reader liked the work at hand. He does, however, occasionally describe a reader's overall demeanor as "cheerful,"[35] or "hostile."[36] (Holland covers the topic of affect more completely in an earlier book titled Dynamics of Literary Response.)

The focus in Holland's investigation on the content of the respondents' statements rather than the more elusive, but perhaps even more important emotional aspects is a characteristic which this study shares with most other studies of response. On the issue of affect versus cognition, Holland expresses this position in 5 Readers Reading:

> "Feelings" should be expanded to include "thoughts" as well, and one could also wonder whether one must limit responses to those "at the time." After all, sometimes a reader changes his mind in retrospect. Certainly the teaching of literature aims at sophisticating responses beyond that first impulse. It seemed I had to be interested generally in the interaction of a person with a story, and anything that was part of their relationship had to be counted as part of "response."[37]

In a nine page appendix to 5 Readers Reading titled "The

Question of Affect," Holland also addresses the difficulty of capturing feeling when he quotes Freud's statement that an analyst must "fall back on ideational content which is most readily associated with the feeling" when an emotion cannot be described in terms of "physiological signs."[38] Based on this Freudian principle, then, Holland views thoughts and feelings as being very closely associated and treats them almost interchangeably.

A phenomenon which Holland seeks to describe and account for in more detail than he does feeling is the "willing suspension of disbelief" or a reader's acceptance of events and characters in a story that he would normally question were he to encounter them in reality. Related to "willing suspension" is literary "absorption" which occurs when a reader becomes so engrossed in a fictional work as to feel totally lost in it and temporarily unaware of his immediate surroundings or concerns. Much of recreational reading is done with the express purpose of escape and is considered most satisfactory when the reader can experience this kind of "oneness" with his chosen novel, story or poem. According to Holland, when a piece of literature "works" for a reader, the boundaries of separation between the reader and the literary piece are overcome through a matching of identity theme and textual form and content, creating a nexus between the reader's inner emotional being and the fantasy material in the text. In Holland's words:

> . . . he will try to make the language, events, or people he creates from the text function in multiple directions to work out the compromise among the demands of inner and outer reality that is his own style. But in this particular context, his momentary response, he will try to use words, plot, and characters to act out that part of his lifestyle which defines what he expects from an other. To the extent he succeeds, the boundary between self and gratifying text will blur and fade. He will become "absorbed."[39]

Further, Holland speaks of the reader's relation to the text in terms of an interpersonal interaction:

> The literary work I read today represents the latest in the long sequence of gratifying others to whom I have related, beginning with the nurturing mother of earliest infancy who actualized in me a certain lifestyle. . . . Other is other, be it book or mother, casual friend or total environment, and we relate to that other in terms of our particular identities.[40]

This model of the interaction between text and reader and the description of the process of absorption are hallmarks of Holland's approach and, as will be seen later provide contrast to the ideas of at least one of the investigators who were to follow him.

Additional Characteristics

Also of importance is the way Holland addresses the following key issues in 5 Readers Reading: (1) the clinical/therapeutic limitations of the investigation, (2) the place of his own personality in the study, (3) the role of the interview situation or events in the subject's immediate life in the outcome of his experiment, and (4) the influence, if any, which interaction between the subjects may have had in the formation of individual responses and the subsequently generated data. Although Holland arrives at some in-depth insights about his subjects, he reports that he carefully shunned any attempt to "counsel" the students as would a psychiatrist or psychologist. Concerning the danger that a meta-reader might stumble onto the territory of the psychological counselor Holland states:

> Above all, one must avoid diagnosis or any use of terms that even slightly suggest psychopathology. Needless to say, the old-fashioned kind of symbol-twirling that used to pass for psychoanalytic criticism is completely out of place.[41]

Also, it should be remembered that the subjects did not participate in the data analysis and were never formally presented with Holland's analysis of their responses during the experiment itself.

As a conscious proponent of the subjective approach, Holland exhibits a high awareness of the presence of his own point of view in analyzing both the text and the readers' responses. This awareness is evident in Holland's description of his own book:

> You could see . . . [5 Readers Reading] as a sequence: Sam looks (through his personality) at "A Rose for Emily". You look (through your personality) at me looking (through my personality) at Sam looking (through his personality) at one, by now much overburdened short story.[42]

Further, he recognizes that the identity themes "are drastically open to the biases of the interpreter's own style". Holland continues, "Just as they are five readers reading stories, so I am a sixth reader reading their readings. It can't be helped. One must simply acknowledge the personal concerns of the interpreter."[43]

Another aspect of the presence of the investigator's personality is the effect it may have on the way the respondent reads the text or reports his response during the interview.. Although Holland is not as sensitive to this influence of the investigator's presence as he is to his own subjectivity, he does make the observation that one subject perceived him as a "domineering teacher" and therefore may have reacted defensively to the reading and the interview.[44] He reports the behavior of another subject during the interview in light of the interviewer's presence when he writes:

> From time to time, Shep would use his interest in 'systems' to throw out a digression in such a way as to mobilize opposition--although I think these maneuvers had more to do with his response to me than to the story.[45]

Approaches taken by the other investigators to the question of their own personalities and the effect which their interactions with the subjects had on the outcome of the studies will provide a point of comparison and contrast with Holland's.

Another issue related to concerns about the interviewer's presence and personality is the question of the role which immediate circumstances surrounding the investigative situation or the subject's life play in determining the reader's response or his report of it. In the following statement, Holland identifies the circumstantial and non-circumstantial variables involved in response and makes a judgment about their relative importance which is consistent with his response theory:

> . . . the story did not "cause" their response--they did. Similarly, the interviewer and the interview situation did not "cause" their response. Nor did the current crises in their lives. But any or all of these might have--no, must have--entered into what they said about these stories. The point is: what they said was their own inner style of creation and synthesis of everything they were experiencing at that moment.[46]

The emphasis which Holland places on stable personality characteristics as the wellspring of response coupled with the recognition of other variables distinguishes him from three of the other meta-readers who either emphasize circumstantial variables more, or give them no consideration at all.

Unlike the next study to be discussed, Holland's investigation is not designed to answer questions about the influence which interaction between subjects about the text may have on response. Further, implied in the following statement is the idea that very little of what readers actually preceive about the text can be shared at all, although the illusion of "agreement" or "consensus" can be created through use of the same words. Speaking of a hypothetical group of a dozen readers, Holland writes:

> . . . consensus [is] a series of statements about the story all the twelve readers will agree with. But looked at from the inside, each reader still has his own private, personal, and perhaps very idiosyncratic experience that no one else can share or even know.[47]

Although this ultimate truth is inherent in the nature of language, Holland's consciousness of it is a definable feature of his approach. He also addresses the broader, epistemological implications of this statement when he says:

> . . . only by beginning with different subjectives can we arrive at that consensus about experience that constitutes all the objectivity subjective beings can have. If we were not different and therefore subjective, we could not sense reality at all--we would simply be compelled by it, having no more personal experience of our interaction with the world than objects do of other objects.[48]

Of the studies discussed here, only David Bleich's Subjective Criticism contains original theory about perception as it relates to reading on a level equal to or beyond that found in 5 Readers Reading.

III. ANTHONY PETROSKY: "INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP RESPONSES OF FOURTEEN AND FIFTEEN YEAR OLDS . . . "

In 1975, the same year that 5 Readers Reading was published, Anthony Petrosky reported the results of his response study in a doctoral dissertation with the formidable title: "Individual and Group Responses of Fourteen and Fifteen Year Olds to Short Stories, Novels, Poems, and Thematic Apperception Tests: Case Studies based on Piagetian Genetic Epistomology and Freudian Psychoanalytic Ego Psychology." As a student of Holland, Petrosky employs many of his predecessor's techniques in an effort to discover the effects which the distinct cognitive and affective characteristics of early adolescence have on response to fiction and poetry. In meeting this challenge, he combines a Freudian, psychoanalytic approach with the developmental psychological theories of Jean Piaget, the famous twentieth century educator. Although Petrosky shares many of Holland's philosophical positions, he bases much of his data analysis on Piaget's identification and description of the distinct mental processes or thought patterns which are attributable to individuals of different ages. As will be seen in the following sections, Petrosky works extensively with Piaget's model of intellectual growth as a progression from one discrete "stage-specific" or age-associated ability to the next.

In the introduction to the dissertation Petrosky explains the focus of his study with these words:

> The need for this study lies in the need for the examination of all response processes in the continuum of response as developmental, adaptive, dynamic experiences having their roots in the earliest childhood experiences: the mother-child relationship, and the evolution of the self as an "I" separate from the environment of "others." The process of response is in fact evolutionary and dependent on the subjective needs and communication of the individual, and "interpersonal relationships in general . . ." Thus I feel it is an important and integral part of this investigation to examine the readers and their response in light of Piaget's genetic epistomology.[1]

He defines his area of interest further by posing the following questions:

> How and to what degree are stage-specific characteristic operations related to the adolescent's response to literature? Can we expect the newly acquired abilities of . . . [adolescence] to play a dominant role in response to fiction? Is response to literature learned? If so, to what degree do stage-specific abilities and limitations structure the types of responses possible in any given developmental stage? Does response to literature progress and develop along a longitudinal continuum consistent with general cognitive and ego-related development? And finally, most importantly, is response to literature an extension of the adaptive functions of the intellect and the psyche?[2]

A second significant and unusual line of inquiry pursued by Petrosky in his study concerns the nature of interaction between readers and the effect which that interaction has on response. He couches his question about reader interaction in philosophical terms when he writes, "By what process does individual, subjective response to literature become shared by a group and in this sense become 'objective'?"[3]

Petrosky proceeded to answer these questions by taping and transcribing the responses of four ninth-grade volunteers to twelve widely varied texts. He gathered the data through a series of individual interviews with the subjects and group discussion sessions. Like Holland, he employs the results of Thematic Apperception Tests to supplement his impressionistic observations about the personalities of the four individuals. All of the subjects (two boys and two girls) attended a junior high school in a "blue collar suburb" of Buffalo, New York,[4] and all tested as "average or above average" readers.[5] These fourteen and fifteen year old students were appropriate subjects for this developmental study because as young adolescents they were likely to exhibit the cognitive and affective characteristics which Piaget ascribes to recent post-pubescent individuals. Although Petrosky is interested in identifying the universal dynamics of reader response, he "strictly" limits the applicability of his conclusions to readers in the developmental stage identified by Piaget as the adolescent period of "Formal Operations."[6] He further qualifies his conclusions by characterizing them as descriptive of the attributes of this particular group of readers.

For each of the four respondents, Petrosky gathered three sets of data: individual responses, TAT scores and responses in group discussion. The investigator himself conducted the interviews twice weekly and interpreted the TATs. His interviews with the individuals included discussion of all the texts which were read. During the individual meetings Petrosky varied his interview technique from text to text, sometimes asking "very specific, motivation-directed questions"[7] and sometimes asking general questions of the how-do-you-feel-about variety. Occasionally the investigator requested the respondent to retell the story or pick out something the individual remembered and wanted to discuss.[8] The investigator was not present during the group discussions and the subjects were responsible for flipping the tape recorder on and off. They were instructed to tape all the talking which took place "regardless of subject matter."[9] Petrosky listened to the tapes and read the transcripts.[10]

Not trained as a psychologist or psychiatrist, Petrosky employs the theme identification technique of the literary critic to interpret both the TAT results[11] and the response transcripts themselves. He uses the supporting evidence from the TATs liberally in his analysis of the reading responses and observes that "As a rule, the readers' responses to the TAT's are more concise and individualistic than the responses to literary selections; the individual styles of the subjects are more apparent in the TAT responses."[12] Records of IQ test results were also available to the investigator and he quotes such a score in his discussion of one subject.[13]

Early in the description of his methods and procedures, Petrosky acknowledges his reliance on Holland's theory as a basis for the analysis of the data.[14] The following statement gives an indication of Petrosky's analytical approach and reveals that he avoids predicting subject behavior, perhaps because of his predecessor's failure in this area: ". . . I am concerned with the revelation of themes and the relationships of themes. The pattern model is explanatory within a given context; I make no attempt at prediction based on these specifc explanations."[15] Like Holland, Petrosky also places a clinical/therapeutic limitation on his study and adopts a "holistic" approach:

> I am not engaged in psychoanalysis or therapy of any sort. . . . Using . . . [a] holistic approach I tie together various aspects, or themes, to form a picture of characteristic response styles for each respondent. The patterns of response, the individual style of each respondent, and the manner in which the respondents use symbolic language are the major themes of these case reports; they comprise a stage-specific history of response to literature for the individual respondents.[16]

Petrosky then adds to his analysis "a Piagetian over-view (whenever possible I comment on the responses in terms of Piaget's research) . . . [He then] comments . . . on the responses (whenever possible) in terms of [Freudian] psychoanalytic ego psychology."[17] He also attempts to identify characteristics which the respondents share as well as the individual styles of each reader.[18] A distinctive feature of Petrosky's study is his use of a chart to summarize his findings for each reader. (An example appears in appendix 1 on p. 203.)

The twelve texts selected by Petrosky include two novels, a diary, four short stories and five poems. Although each of the texts was chosen on the basis of its literary quality, reading level and thematic content, Petrosky had an additional reason for choosing the Steinbeck short story "Johnny Bear". In this "complicated, subtle"[19] text Petrosky sees a special challenge for the readers--the need to use the particular kind of thought pattern associated by Piaget with the developmental stage of early adolescence:

> An understanding of the story requires use of sophisticated deduction--deduction which is purely hypothetical up to the last lines of the story. It is the same hypothetico-deductive logic that Piaget claims adolescents of this age are beginning to use with a marked, but awkward, degree of utility. Since none of the readers were able to solve the story, I had to lead them, individually, through a detailed reconstruction of the story. The results are that they finally see it my way--a manipulation which in itself is interesting.[20]

More will be said about "Johnny Bear" when a sample of Petrosky's case studies is examined in detail. In addition to using skill in "hypothetico-deductive logic" as an indicator of cognitive development, Petrosky also looks for characteristics of adolescent thought patterns in his readers' approaches to " . . . character motives; author's intentions; possible (unstated) outcomes; and the removal of a literary experience from its literary context (i.e., raising the literary experience to a social or psychological level)."[21]

Philosophical Background

Petrosky's report of his findings is preceded by two heavily referenced introductory chapters in which he probes the nature of subjectivity as well as the synthesis of a "shared reality" through interpersonal relationships. These chapters also contain an explanation of the applicability of Piaget's theories of development to the phenomenon of literary response and a description of the compatibility between Piaget's theories and those of Freud.[22] Although there is not room in this presentation to do justice to Petrosky's discussion, it is important to acknowledge his use of the work of Cassirer, Freud and Kant in building the case for a subjective reality and to summarize briefly some of the key points he makes.

Petrosky considers the nature of man in the first chapter by protesting "the distorting artificial concepts and terminologies of Cartesian Philosophy."[23] For Petrosky, the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy is inaccurate and implies a similarly fictitious separation in the cognitive/affective and objective/subjective functions of the mind or personality. As a subscriber to Piaget's developmental theories, the author of "Individual and Group Responses . . . " views the human being as a synthesis of all these aspects and sees the appropriate question for response research as being, How do all these functions of the human being work together in perception?, not How do they oppose or contradict each other? Consistent with this point of view, Petrosky, like Holland, makes little attempt to distinguish between thought and feeling.

Piaget's theories deal with development of the child's spatial perceptions or normal changes in the way a child views and responds to the physical environment. Petrosky explains the applicability of Piaget's ideas to reader response by equating response to literature with spatial perceptions, and the physical environment with the fictional reality of the text. According to Petrosky, the same patterns and genetic limitations Piaget observes in the growth of the child's perception of the physical world are also observable in the adolescent reader's perceptions of a text.[24]

Petrosky's interest in the group interactions of his subjects is based on the importance which Piaget places on interpersonal relationships in "the development of thought and identity" and the attainment of "what Piaget calls 'a truly objective picture of reality,' which in this investigation is the literary text.[25] (Petrosky's own placement of the text on the objective-subjective continuum will be discussed in the following section.) Petrosky, clearly a proponent of the subjective approach as it was defined in the introductory section of this presentation (pp. 31-33), explains Piaget's reference to a "truly objective picture of reality" this way:

> For Piaget, a "truly objective picture of reality" becomes an absolute attainable in its perfect form only at the end of the evolutionary process. It is an absolute dependent on every individual's subjective perceptions which reach a consensus through dialectical exchange. I think that what is important here is the entire process Piaget is describing, not its eventual evolutionary outcome. The process he describes is a dialectic, a dialectic necessary to our development, and consequently a dialectic that is both inter- and intrapersonal. It is therefore possible to say response to literature is also a dialectic, inter- and intrapersonal, that is, subjective. Indeed, response to anyone or anything necessarily entails inter- and intrapersonal relations leading first to a dialectic established on various levels as a result of subjectivity and only then to a truly objective picture of reality.[26]

Petrosky's analysis of his subjects' collective discussions about the text is an attempt to see this Piagetian dialectic at work in relation to perceptions of literature. In his introduction Petrosky also makes reference to an early article by Bleich in which the case is made for the importance of the synthesis of objective truth through the sharing of subjective perceptions.[27]

In the second part of his introduction, Petrosky reviews Holland's theories as well as the basic tenets of Freudian psychoanalysis. Further, he establishes the characteristics of adolescence as seen by Anna Freud, Piaget and the renowned psychologist Erik Erikson. Perhaps most significant to his data analysis is the overlap which Petrosky establishes in this section between the developmental theories of Piaget and Freud:

> Both fields of study recognize three main periods of development, three periods of recurring egocentricity within the continuum of decreasing egocentricity. First, there is the sensory-motor (infantile) period; second is the preoperational-concrete operations period (latency-prepuberty); and third is the formal operations period (puberty-adolescence). These are viewed, by both perspectives, as developmental stages of the utmost importance.[28]

The Nature of the Text

Petrosky's idea of what the term "text" includes is identical to the one used in this presentation (definition on pp. 35-36, above). He writes:

> I think it wise to admit that although the response process itself is highly subjective, there are, nevertheless, elements of a literary text that can be labeled objective information. In this objective category I put such aspects of literary selections as: stated chronological sequence, identifiable geography, stated temporal information--in short, elements in the story that can be clearly understood as stated.[29]

The concept expressed here is also the same as the one underlying Holland's statement about "doing violence to the text" appearing on p. 46 of this presentation in which a basic degree of indisputable textual content is recognized. Petrosky is in agreement with his mentor again when he makes the following contrasting point about the subjective nature of the text. (The text is equated to reality or the spatial environment in a Piagetian sense):

> Reality in the case of response to literature is the literary text. Since a truly objective reality is an absolute, and since we cannot assume that we have reached the end of our evolutionary rope, reality, in this absolute sense, is for now unattainable. It does not seem reasonable to assume that man in this time and place is the end of evolutionary processes and has reached the highest degree of abstraction possible. It is more reasonable to assume that the actual importance of our attempt to attain this absolute is the resulting subjective picture of reality which is the human dialectic.[30]

In other words, then, although the text has some stable, immutable components for both Petrosky and Holland, they view it as an essentially subjective quantity not because subjectivity is a characteristic of a page with black marks on it, but because subjectivity is an essential quality of human perception.

At least initially, the positions of Petrosky and Holland seem to diverge slightly on the question of how much the author can share with the reader through the text. From Holland's point of view, the unconscious fantasy level of reading and presumably writing is so unique to each individual that " . . . the dynamics in any given reader's mind will not coincide with the author's processes . . . "[31] As was explained in the discussion of Holland's ideas, it is precisely through this unconscious (and conscious) fantasizing process on the part of the reader that meaning is extracted from a fictional text. Surely the implication here is not that the author can not communicate "meaning" to the reader. In contrast to this possible interpretation of Holland's words, Petrosky establishes his position in the following statement:

> My main point is that I think it is possible for the reader to know exactly what the poet says and means in a poem. It is possible for the reader to match up his "meaning" of the text with the meaning attributed to the text by its author.. If we assume the reader constructs meaning rather than deriving it from a poem, we have to ask the question: Constructs meaning with what? To say simply that meaning is constructed from past experiences or already stored information still does not answer the question. There is a lower common denominator: What are the past experiences and stored information constructed with? If we are to believe Ernest Cassirer and Jean Piaget, meaning is constructed with symbols--symbolic language and symbolic logic. Therefore, this matching of the readers "meaning" to the writer's meaning is possible because of shared symbolic language and logic. The reader does reconstruct from the book in his own style, but it is a reconstruction made possible, at least in part, by the intricate network of shared symbolic language and logic.[32]

Clearly one obstacle to comparing the positions of these two meta-readers on the point of the degree of communication between reader and author is the lack of a commonly agreed upon definition for that highly abstract and mutli-layered term "meaning." A distinction must be drawn here between the different levels of "meaning" being discussed by Holland and Petrosky if the differences and similarities of their positions are not to be obscured behind a semantic smoke screen. The same distinction of levels must be made in relation to the concept of "symbolic language."

Petrosky and Holland agree that language and consequently meaning have a connotative and a denotative dimension. Central to the subjective approach accepted by both of these thinkers is the insight that meaning and language include that which human beings can communicate and that which we can experience reflexively, only for ourselves. This tension between outer and inner reality is, after all, the essence of individuality in reader response. When Holland speaks of "violating the text" he is alluding to a misapprehension of the denotative value of the author's words. Similarly, Petrosky's statement also concerns that level of symbolic language which we can share.

Although at first glance Holland and Petrosky seem to present opposing views on the subjective nature of the text, when their statements are considered in the context of the theories the two men share, their positions are not contradictory. For Holland the fact that the deeper level fantasizing activities of the author during the act of creation are different than those of the reader during his recreation of the text does not preclude the communication of a common denotative understanding of the words between writer and reader on the level to which Petrosky's statement also applies. According to Holland, by writing a text the author is creating the materials for the reader's fantasies and cannot predetermine or share the processes by which the reader will make sense of the text. Since Petrosky subscribes to Holland's concepts and the subjective approach, he too recognizes that some of the deeper elements of the personal or connotative meaning of a text can not be communicated between writer and reader and are in fact not even available to either individual on a conscious, linguistic level. Both meta-readers agree, however, that the simple denotative value given to the text by the author can be understood by the reader.

Taken as a matter of common sense, very few people (meta-readers included) would take exception to the idea that words have the same basic definition for two people using the same language. Although far from philosophically complex, this flat truism suddenly becomes subtle and sophisticated when the following question is posed: At what point does the shared meaning break down and individual meaning take over? Perhaps the value of words as the currency for the exchange of ideas represents only a fraction of their worth when compared to the emotional, psychological and associative value they carry for the individual. Answers to this question are, of course, theoretical and will probably remain so; but the point to be made is that one source of conflict among the ideas of the meta-readers discussed here derives from the degree of emphasis each places on the denotative and connotative aspects of language and by extension the objectivity and subjectivity of the text.

Piaget and Reader Response

According to Piagetian theory, Petrosky's fourteen and fifteen year old subjects are in a transition period between two cognitive stages, an earlier one in which they are able to carry out thought patterns known as "Concrete Operations" and a later one during which they become capable of executing "Formal Operations." To account for individual differences in rates of development, Petrosky looks for thought patterns characteristic of both levels of cognition in the responses of his subjects. Quoting directly from Piaget's work, Petrosky explains the difference between these two stages:

> Piaget draws a distinction between Concrete Operations and Formal Operations: the latter is marked by the ability of the intellect to deal with abstractions; the former imposes stringencies on the intellect preventing abstract reasoning: "The concrete operations are based on the logic of classes and the logic of relations; they are means of structuring immediately present reality. During the formal stage, on the other hand, the adolescent comes to control formal logic. Rather than reasoning with directly given data alone, he begins to reason with propositions and with hypotheses."[30] The period of Concrete Operations with its characteristic traits of dealing exclusively with reality, serial ordering, and classifications (i.e., boys + girls = children) sets the ground for the following period of Formal Operations which is marked by the ability to reason abstractly, intellectualize, and participate in hypothetico-deductive logic. In "formal operations there is even more than reality involved, since the world of the possible becomes available for construction and since thought becomes free from the real world."[31] The period of Formal Operations brings with it the world of the possible, and with this

comes increasing concern for the future.[33]

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[30] Bärbel Inhelder and Jean Piaget, The Growth of Logical Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence, p. xvii.

[31] Jean Piaget, The Psychology of Intelligence, p. 151.

Petrosky proceeded on the assumption that capabilities of the earlier stage are not lost with maturation, but are built upon as the individual enters a new realm of cognitive proficiency. "We do know, from Holland's studies, that sorting-out and reliance on concrete chronologies in stories persists, in some degree, into the college years."[34] Although the individual capable of "Formal Operations" can still carry out "Concrete" ones, by definition a person in the Concrete period can not synthesize thought patterns requiring greater abstraction. Developmental stages place limits on the specific cognitive skills a given individual has at his command.[35]

In addition to describing the reactions of his subjects in terms of the stages identified by Piaget, Petrosky draws upon the writings of Anna Freud whose characterization of adolescence meshes nicely with Piaget's observations. According to Freud, teenagers experience an almost overwhelming onslaught of instincts precipitated by their sudden emotional and physical spurt toward adulthood. To keep their anxiety-provoking urges in check, they develop the defense mechanisms of intellectualization and asceticism. (Intellectualization is a means by which an individual protects himself from feelings through involvement with ideas and thoughts, and asceticism is a form of self denial where emotional or physical needs or desires are ignored. The tough, aloof teenager who hides behind a veneer of "cool" can be seen as manifesting adolescent asceticism.)

For Petrosky, Freud's identification of these defense mechanisms corroborates Piaget's picture of young adolescents in transition from one stage to another, attempting to come to grips with a wave of amorphous but nonetheless powerful new feelings.[36] "As . . . [Freud] concludes, the defenses of intellectualism and asceticism do not end in action, but rather in abstraction and mental reflection. It is the instincts that abstraction and reflective thoughts are attempting to deal with, undifferentiated instincts which mark a progression from one stage-specific period to another."[37]

Petrosky uses the concepts of Freud and Piaget to describe the idiosyncratic reactions of individual respondents and to explain common characteristics which he sees in the responses of all the subjects. Considering the four adolescents as a group Petrosky writes:

> The attempt to find meaning, a process which requires symbolic thought, is a constant quest of the readers participating in this study. The quest for meaning suggests a cognitive/affective excursion into the area of abstract language and logic. To find meaning

> and then to share this abstract and symbolic meaning with others requires that the respondent use those types of logic and thought processes that Piaget attributes to the stage-specific abilities of Formal Operations. The ardent pursuance of meaning conducted by the readers in this study is as visible in the case study data as the respondents' romps with intellectualization. In all cases, the emphasis given to these operations (search for meaning and rampant intellectualization) is noteworthy.[38]

In terms of how these students extract meaning from the texts, Petrosky notes that all four readers concentrate more on the "surface structure" (the words and sentences in the text) than on the abstract significance of the literature. He adds, however, that this tendency is more pronounced in individuals who are not yet adept at Formal Operations and are consequently more apt to miss the point of what is read. Petrosky speculates that this tendency in the students may be the result of classroom training rather than strictly a function of cognitive development.[39] He also reports that all of his subjects demonstrate a firm proficiency with Concrete Operations and easily carry out the intellectual operation of "categorization." The subjects' reliance on this already established conceptual capacity shows itself in the frequency with which they pigeonhole characters they read about as, for example, the "hippy type" or "the square kids."[40]

As a meta-reader Petrosky is also vitally interested in individual differences and the implications of Piaget's theories for the single respondent. Consistent with Holland's approach, the later investigator considers personality or, personal "style" as an important variable in the response picture. (See table in appendix 1, p. 203.) His perception of the role of this key variable is expressed in the following statement:

> The aspects of stage-specific operations that are the most predominant or the most observable in the subject's responses depend on a number of interrelated factors; for example, the personality of the subject plays a great role in how and what an individual chooses to emphasize within the framework of any given developmental period, and the reading ability of a subject is both influenced by and correlated with stage-specific operations (i.e., a reader who cannot read for deep meaning will not be able to go through the process of hypothetically deducing implied logical structures).[41]

The profiles which Petrosky put together for the subjects Kevin and Kathy exemplify how Piaget's concepts of stage-specific development are applied to individual respondents in this study. For purposes of illustration, the profiles of a less perceptually mature reader (Kevin) and a more perceptually mature reader (Kathy) are selected for discussion here. Although in his responses Kevin exhibits some characteristics of an individual in the stage of Formal Operations, e.g. concern for the future, his responses to the short stories in particular suggest that he was limited at the time of the study to thought patterns characteristic of the earlier period of Concrete Operations. Like the other readers, Kevin is baffled by the previously mentioned Steinbeck mystery "Johnny Bear," the comprehension of which requires the use of hypothetico-deductive logic. The distinctive feature of Kevin's reaction, though, is that even when the plot is explained to him by Petrosky, he still cannot follow the train of deductive thought and cannot "see the connections" between the episodes in the text and the meaning of the plot.[42] In his description of Kevin's reaction to another story, "The Five-Forty-Eight" by John Cheever, Petrosky observes:

> There are times . . . when Kevin hypothetically abstracts thoughts and actions, but generally he does not consider hypothetical motives for thoughts and actions in his responses. When he says one should think about decisions, he means thinking in a strictly concrete sense, that is, thinking as classification, serialization, and categorization.[43]

As is the case with "Johnny Bear," Shirley Jackson's short story, "The Lottery", poses special problems for Kevin even though he and the other readers had read the story before and had seen the film version.[44] Because Kevin "sees thought and action as inexplicably [sic] [inextricably?] tied to a specific context"[45] and cannot execute the "hypothetical abstraction" necessary to view events from a more distant perspective, Kevin never sees the story as an allegorical statement and fails to grasp its wider moral and philosophical significance.

Instead of attacking the fictional institutionalized stoning ceremony in the story as barbaric, Kevin confines his comments to observations about how the ceremony or "lottery" could be improved by excluding young children from the pool of prospective victims. In an argument containing more than one logical lapse, Kevin characterizes the lottery as an "acceptable" method of population control despite his suggestion about sparing the children from stoning.[46] Petrosky reports that unlike the more mature readers (one of whom will be discussed next), Kevin exhibits another characteristic of concrete thinking, the tendency to relate literary characters to people he knows.[47]

In contrast to these observations about Kevin, Petrosky was prompted to make this comment about Kathy (one of his more advanced subjects) after she solved the mystery in "Johnny Bear" with a minimum of hinting from the interviewer: "It seems that Kathy has advanced the furthest of all readers into that aspect of Formal Operations that makes hypothetico-deductive logic available to the individual's thought processes."[48] Kathy's cognitive capabilities manifest themselves in her reactions to "The Lottery" as well, from which she draws this abstract meaning. (The brackets contain Petrosky's interpolation.):

> . . . it sort of had a message in it to us. I think it sort of showed us that maybe we should not take violence so--we sit back and we watch TV and all the violence is shown on it . . . we don't really think about it too much. I think this story shows what could happen if we just take it [violence] too like everyday.[49]

Kathy also synthesized a unique but well "rationalized" interpretation for the baffling reactions of a character in the story "The Stone Boy" by Gina Berriault.[50] Her ability to speculate about character motives with imagination as well as attention to textual "surface structure" represents another important difference between Kathy and Kevin," . . . Kathy is comfortable in the realm of the possible while Kevin is not; he relies heavily on his past experiences to construct literal relations, in terms of informational utility from his literary experiences."[51] While Kevin is mired down with the cognitive necessity of drawing connections between the text and his own life, Kathy is free to dabble in abstraction and contemplate the hypothetical significance of textual events and fictional characters.

In the tradition of I. A. Richards and an endless string of less famous English teachers who have pondered the reasons for student miscomprehension of literature, Petrosky also strives to explain mistakes in the understanding of his readers within his theoretical frame of reference. As one would expect, he sees these perceptual difficulties in Piagetian terms:

> Mistaken inferences, or what appear to be mistaken inferences, are often incomplete logic sequences (the ordering of scattered episodes), or logic sequences constructed solely from empirically given information. If a reader cannot hypothetically deduce the logic sequence that makes an inference possible, then he cannot make the inference.[52]

As was seen in the case of Kevin, the inability to handle such Formal Operations as hypothetical deduction certainly can be the cause of reader confusion. Although Petrosky is a student of Norman Holland, his explanation for reader miscomprehension contrasts with the psychologically oriented one of the senior investigator.

The Sequential Progression of Response

Beyond applying stage-specific theory to the readers and the reading experiences they report, Petrosky also notices that the group and individual responses which he records are characterized by identifiable patterns of activity or steps which the readers seem to go through in framing their reactions. About the abstract thinker Kathy, he writes:

> . . . first, she reads the story for meaning; second, she formulates her opinions about the characters and the general meaning of the stories; and third, after she has formed her opinions, she goes back to the text to find supporting evidence for her response-opinions. The process appears to be a variation of analytic ciphering; that is, once the general meaning is discerned, then the text is carefully analyzed for evidence to support conclusions. This is by no means a unique process; I think everyone who reads with the intention of responding either orally or in writing goes through variations of this ciphering process.[53]

The general pattern which Petrosky finds in the responses of all four individuals implies that each time these readers digest a text they follow a basic sequence of activities. First they perform the Concrete Operations of which they have full command and then attend to aspects of the story which require them to depart from the simple recollection of personal memories to the abstraction associated with Formal Operations. "Their chain of response, a sensible and natural one, is to first respond to those elements in the text that bring to mind their similar past experiences, and then to confront those elements in the text for which they have no frame of reference."[54] As will be seen in the next two chapters, Odell and Cooper and Bleich observe patterns in the responses of their subjects that correspond to this progression from personal or concrete thoughts to more abstract ones. For Holland, Petrosky and Bleich, the reader's conscious and/or unconscious association of material from his own experience to the people and events in the text is a prerequisite to the meaning-making process.

Unlike the other meta-readers discussed in this presentation, Petrosky also "maps" the patterns running through the subjects' group discussions of the texts. Consistent with the Piagetian concept that group interaction or interpersonal "dialectic" is the means by which human beings establish objective reality, Petrosky is able to identify the following components in the conversations of the four subjects:

> When they are going smoothly, the group discussions proceed with visible sequential order: first, the individual members of the group attempt to deal with the literal elements of the story; the group tests each member's view and interpretation of such things as the chronological sequence of events and physical descriptions; second, attempts are made to arrive at a consensus on the literal elements that is acceptable to the members of the group; third, once

> the group is fairly sure of a shared interpretation of literal elements, then personal opinions and recollections are introduced to the group by its individual members; fourth, the group attempts to accommodate the more abstract elements of the individuals' responses--subjective opinions and recollections (often this is the final step in group discussions simply because the opinions and perspectives are too diverse to reconcile in any workable way); and fifth, if the group is able, in any workable degree, to accommodate the personal interpretations and recollections of its members, then something exciting happens; individuals begin to realize and understand each other's personal interpretations and perspectives.[55]

To this statement Petrosky adds the qualification that these components do not always appear in the same order and that the discussions follow a flexible path. He does point out, however, that establishment of a consensus about some of the facts in the text usually precedes the group exchange of more subjective reactions.[56]

In terms of stage-specific tendencies, Petrosky sees the behavior of the group as a reflection of the cognitive level of its members--the period of Formal Operations:

> . . . the adolescent of this period is concerned first with the form of logic--something that can be agreed to in group discussion, something truly objective that everyone can deduce (for example, the chronology of events within a literary text, although often even this isn't shared). Secondly, he is concerned with the content of logic--the subjective dialogue (inter-or intrapersonal)of the dialectic centered around individual perceptions of a text.[57]

Petrosky's attention to the details of the interaction between subjects is unique among the meta-readers examined in this presentation.

Affect and Cognition

As was mentioned in connection with Petrosky's abandonment of the Cartesian mind versus body model of man, the author of "Individual and Group Responses . . ." views human beings as a unity of their affective and cognitive aspects. Quoting Piaget, he writes:

> . . . when speaking of form and content, subjective and objective, it should be remembered that although on paper these categories appear to be Cartesian dualities, in reality they are dynamic, integral parts of each other's functioning and can not be separated: "Affective life and cognitive life, then, are inseparable although distinct. They are inseparable because all interaction with the environment involves both a structuring and a valuation, but they are nonetheless distinct, since these two aspects of behaviour cannot be reduced to one another."[58]

Petrosky's data reinforced his position on this point. Among his conclusions is the idea that " . . . stage-specific operations and an identity theme (or personality patterns) are not separable in any way other than theory. Personality patterns and stage-specific operations are reflections of inseparable, but distinct human processes (cognitive and affective) . . ."[59] For Petrosky, response is the product of both a reader's cognitive development and individual psyche working in concert. While stage-specific abilities determine what a person can do, personality controls what he will attempt to do and how much energy he will direct toward that effort.[60]

In the analysis of the responses themselves, Petrosky often reports whether a subject enjoyed reading a text, but rarely does he center his discussion around a specific identifiable emotion which the respondent may experience as a result of the fictional events. Petrosky's approach to the question of affect is very similar to Holland's--broad personality themes and individual styles are identified, the positive and negative quality of feeling toward the literature is noted, but actual feeling and its origin are not analyzed to any significant degree. (Mention of specific feelings is occasionally made by both investigators in the course of their respective data presentations, however.)

The Variables of Response

In summarizing his findings Petrosky isolates "five dominant" factors of reader reaction: "stage-specific operations, identity theme (or personality), past experience, expectations, and reading ability."[61] Of these variables, he identifies stage-specific operations, identity theme and past experience as being the most important.[62] The prominence Petrosky gives to the variable of identity theme constitutes his answer to the crucial question of consistency of individual reader response across several texts. He writes, "This study does support the conclusions of Norman Holland that various individual themes do appear in readers' responses to works of literature, and that these themes evolve [sic] around one central core, or identity theme."[63] Petrosky's agreement with Holland about consistency of response as a result of stability in personality provides contrast to the position taken by David Bleich which will be described in chapter 5.

Under the general rubric of "past experience" Petrosky includes the important influence that such "significant others" as friends and parents may exert on a reader's response. Related to "past experience" is "expectation," a factor of secondary importance under which Petrosky places the effect which the classroom experience can have on readers. Like most other behaviors, the conscious processes of response can be learned, and many students modify the way they approach literature as a result of their exposure to teachers and peers. Despite constant portrayal of the language and literature curricula in many schools as ineffectual, what readers consciously focus on in a text (or in their report of their reactions to a text) can be at least partially determined by constant exposure to the ubiquitous pedagogical preoccupation with theme, plot and characterization.[64]

"Expectation" includes the whole gamut of generalizations which individuals distill from their social, cultural, educational and personal experiences. Many of these generalizations then become preconceptions upon which individuals base their actions and views of the world. Before readers even approach a text, they already have some ideas about what they should be getting out of a reading experience. The way a reader responds to a text can of course be influenced by that individual's preconceptions about it.

Absent from Petrosky's list of variables are: (1) immediate circumstances in the subject's life (e.g. a recent death or more trivial event), and (2) the interview situation itself (although "expectation" includes the subject's ideas about what the interviewer wants to hear).

In addition to establishing five variables of response and their relative importance, in the final pages of his study Petrosky also offers this succinct enumeration of his findings:

> In sum, the conclusions of this study are as follows: (1) the cognitive and affective parameters of any response in any form are determined by the respondent's stage-specific operations (thought processes) and by the respondent's personality (identity theme); (2) both stage-specific operations and identity theme are intraindividual variables constructed within and with past experiences; in this sense, recollection and reminiscing are integral aspects of the response process; (3) response to literature takes a form (or system) that is learned; (4) the learning of a response form (i.e., expressing theme, plot, etc., or expressing personal feelings, thoughts, etc.) is a direct outcome of the expectations a respondent perceives via the kinds of questions asked of him in order to elicit response; (5) different response forms allow various degrees of freedom (or acceptability) [e.g., free association versus more formally organized exposition]; and (6) response to literature evolves into a genuine dialectical experience when the respondents are given the opportunity to articulate and share personal impressions and interpretations in group situations.[65]

Mention should also be made of the relationship between Petrosky and his subjects which he characterizes as one of "genuine rapport and friendship."[66] In accord with the subjective nature of the study, Petrosky's description of the interviews reflects a professional but warm and personal approach to the students rather than a forced clinical detachment. (Despite the relaxed atmosphere of give and take, however, it should be remembered that the readers had no role in analyzing their own responses and received no formal feedback about the data). Occasionally in the report of his conversations with the readers, Petrosky expresses his own reactions to them. At one point, for example, he comments that he admires a particular respondent for rejecting any position which is "not backed by the facts".[67] The investigator's awareness of his own feelings during the course of his examination of response is a significant feature of the studies of both Petrosky and Holland (who also makes some personal comments in 5 Readers Reading).[68]

IV. LEE ODELL AND CHARLES R. COOPER: "DESCRIBING RESPONSES TO WORKS OF FICTION"

A year after the completion of Petrosky's dissertation the collaborators, Odell and Cooper, published a twenty-two page article in which they present a system for describing the characteristics of a written response artifact in greater detail than had been previously possible. By combining an already well-recognized statement classification scheme with a theory of rhetoric used to identify the cognitve processes of writers, these meta-readers are able to synthesize an impressive statistical profile of the written responses of an eleventh-grade boy. In terms of intent, scope, sample size and length of report of the study, this investigation is the most limited of the four presented here, but one of the most distinctive in methodology. The work of Odell and Cooper is unique because they use a fairly rigidly structured numerical system to describe the intangible human function of cognition. Also, they present their data in tabular form although the results could have been communicated solely through the verbal section of the article in which the tables are explained.

The intent of this third study is more modest than that of the others examined here because the investigators are proposing a better way to document the subtle characteristics of a written response rather than presenting an explanation of the reading phenomenon. Further, while recognizing that "intuition and other non-conscious activities seem to play an important part" in response, these meta-readers choose not to speculate about the inaccessible recesses of their reader's personality in their analysis of his reactions.[1] Odell and Cooper comment only upon what their subject wrote. While it is their hope that greater understanding of reading can eventually be reached through use of their system, they write in the conclusion of their article, " . . . our system raises more questions than we can answer in this report."[2]

The Odell and Cooper method of data collection is simpler than that of the previously described studies. The subject, John, a high school student of "above average ability" from West Seneca, New York was merely asked by his teacher to "write an extended response" to each of three novels which John selected.[3] No mention is made in the article of the basis on which Odell and Cooper chose John as a subject. Further it is not made clear whether John was a volunteer. No factual or impressionistic information about the subject as a person is offered.

The three novels to which John responded are John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man, and David Westheimer's My Sweet Charlie. The response artifacts examined by Odell and Cooper are the second drafts of the essays John wrote. The response artifact written in reaction to Steinbeck's book is reprinted in the article in its entirety. By combining two different systems to analyze John's essays, Odell and Cooper strive to answer these questions about their subject:

> What intellectual processes guide John's efforts to formulate a particular response? When, for example, he attempts to interpret a literary text, how does he go about it? What intellectual strategies does he use? What habits of thinking and feeling underly [sic] his response? Are there ways in which he might use to [sic] a given strategy so as to respond more fully?[4]

Theoretical Background

Odell and Cooper see their study as a lineal descendant of the work begun by I. A. Richards and continued by the statement classifier James R. Squire (both of whom are mentioned in chapter 1, above). "This line of research has sought to find precise, reliable and comprehensive ways to describe the expressed responses of readers of fiction. Our system builds on a recent development of the best of these schemes . . . "[5] The foundation on which Odell and Cooper build is the work of the prominent content analysts Alan Purves and Richard Beach who, in addition to their experimental investigations, authored the previously cited book Literature and the Reader: Research in Response to Literature, Reading Interests, and the Teaching of Literature.

Odell and Cooper also refer to the work of Norman Holland in their article[6] and acknowledge Anthony Petrosky for his "thoughtful, helpful responses to an early draft of this paper."[7] In addition, these meta-readers consider their findings in light of the conclusions about consistency in the responses of individual readers reached by Cooper in his 1969 study "Preferred Modes of Literary Response: The Characteristics of High School Juniors in Relation to the Consistency of Their Reactions to Three Dissimilar Short Stories." Although reported in a comparatively brief form and somewhat limited in intent, then, the Odell and Cooper study was carried out by reputable reading analysts who developed their ideas with full awareness of the body of response research to which they have contributed.

Procedures and Findings

In analyzing John's response essays, Odell and Cooper first classify each statement he wrote according to Purves's four-category, nine-sub-category scheme which is reproduced immediately below:

Personal Statement
1. about the reader, and "an autobiographical digression"
2. about the work, expressing personal engagement with it

Descriptive Statement
3. narrational, retelling part of the work
4. descriptive of aspects of the work: language, characters, setting, etc.

Interpretive Statement
5. of parts of the work
6. of the whole work

Evaluative Statement
7. about the evocativeness of the work
8. about the construction of the work
9. about the meaningfulness of the work[8]

The frequency with which John uses these kinds of statements in his essays is then recorded (see table 1).

TABLE 1

Responses to Three Novels: Purves and Beach Categories

	Novels			
Category	Of Mice and Men	Invisible Man	My Sweet Charlie	Totals
Personal				
1	3	2		5 (4%)
2	5	12	10	27 (23%)
Descriptive				
3	11	5	5	21 (18%)
4	4	14	16	34 (29%)
Interpretive				
5	6	8	10	24 (21%)
6		3		3 (3%)
Evaluative				
7		1		1 (1%)
8		1		1 (1%)
9				
Totals	29	46	41	116

Source: Lee Odell and Charles R. Cooper, "Describing Responses to Works of Fiction," Research in the Teaching of English 10 (Winter 1976): 207.

Note: The numbers to the left correspond with the numbers of the Purves statement types just listed.

Although Odell and Cooper find the type of data offered by this approach to be valuable, it does not allow them to probe into the exact "intellectual processes" John used in synthesizing a given statement. In order to identify these mental functions Odell and Cooper superimpose a second theoretical model on Purves's original scheme. The model they chose was developed by the rhetoricians R. E. Young, A. L. Becker and K. L. Pike and was described in the book Rhetoric: Discovery and Change (1970). As analysts of the process of composition, these three theorists identify roughly five cognitive maneuvers or "strategies" which individuals execute when writing. Odell and Cooper looked in John's essay for evidence of his use of these maneuvers on the assumption that " . . . these strategies guide not only the act of composing but also the act of responding to a literary text."[9] (Of course the argument could be made that John's use of these strategies is a function of the fact that the response was expressed in a written form, although the Young scheme seems applicable to the transcribed oral responses of the readers in the Holland and Petrosky studies as well.)

The strategies defined by Young and his collaborators include "focus," "contrast," "classification," "change" and "reference to time sequence, logical sequence and physical context."[10] To identify these strategies in John's responses Odell and Cooper looked for agreed-upon "linguistic cues" in each essay which signal the subject's possible use of a given cognitive maneuver.

(They add the qualification, however, that "the meaning of a given statement must, finally, be the basis for determining what intellectual strategies have been used."[11])

John's essays were also divided into "T-units" ("a single independent clause and all of its modifiers"[12]) within which Odell and Cooper found the linguistic cues. Although a single T-Unit can fall into only one of Purves's statement categories, it frequently contains more than one of Young, Becker and Pike's intellectual strategies.[13]

Beyond simply identifying a strategy, Odell and Cooper also attempt to describe the various forms which that strategy can take. For example, in pinning down the way John employs the strategy of "contrast" (the drawing of distinctions between two items or two intangible qualities) Odell and Cooper also strive to find out whether John makes these contrasts "within the text," "between the text and himself" or "outside the text" (e.g. "between two or more texts" or "between two or more readers' responses to the text").[14] The strategies of "focus" "classification" and "change" are similarly divided. This subclassification of strategies allows for the compilation of extremely detailed and subtle data about the frequency with which John uses the various forms of these cognitive maneuvers in each of Purves's statement types. Table 2 (p. 99, below) contains the data on John's use of the strategy of contrast. (The initials stand for the titles of the texts, IM Invisible Man, SC My Sweet Charlie, MM Of Mice and Men; the numbers heading up each column correspond to the Purves sentence types listed on p. 94 [above]; and the numbers after the initials represent the number of times each type of contrast listed on the left of the table was used for each text. Where no numbers appear, John made no responses of that type to any of the texts.)

In the statement below Odell and Cooper explain what they learned from the data in table 2:

> To some extent, different kinds of response [Purves's statement types] seem to elicit different kinds of contrasts [from John]. In describing aspects of the work (Response 4), he notes five kinds of contracts [sic]: contrasts within a single character, contrasts between two or more characters, contrasts between a statement in the text and John's understanding of the text, contrasts between aspects of the text and John's Image of the world, and contrasts within a single character. When John expresses personal engagement (Response 2) with the work, he notes all of these kinds of contrast except contrasts within a single character. In making autobiographical digressions (Response 1) and in retelling part of the work (Response 3), John cites only two kinds of contrasts: between the text and his Image of the world and between two or more readers. In making interpretive statements about parts of the work, (Response 5) John notes only contrasts between the text and his Image and between two or more characters in the novel.[15]

From these observations the meta-readers draw conclusions about the percentage of times John uses a particular intellectual strategy in a particular type of response statement. They are also able to identify the

TABLE 2

Uses of Contrast in Responses to Three Novels

	Kind of response				
Uses of contrast	1	2	3	4	5
1. Within text					
a. within a single character				MM-1 IM-0 SC-1	
b. between two or more aspects of the text		MM-1 IM-0 SC-0		MM-1 IM-2 SC-2	MM-1 IM-4 SC-0
2. Between text and Reader					
a. between character's statement and reader's understanding		MM-0 IM-1 SC-0		MM-2 IM-0 SC-0	
b. between some other facet of the text and reader's Image*	MM-3 IM-1 SC-0	MM-1 IM-5 SC-7	MM-3 IM-0 SC-2	MM-0 IM-6 SC-6	MM-4 IM-5 SC-6
3. Outside text					
a. within reader		MM-1 IM-0 SC-0	MM-0 IM-0 SC-1	MM-0 IM-0 SC-1	
b. between two or more readers' responses	MM-0 IM-1 SC-0				
c. between two or more texts					

Note: "Table . . . [2] group[s] intellectual strategies only under response categories 1-5 of the Purves-Beach system. John makes only six responses in Categories 6-8—and all of those to Invisible Man. Since we are concerned with recurrent features (i.e., characteristic patterns in John's responses and his uses of intellectual strategies, we do not report on the strategies apparent in John's few responses in Categories 6-8."

*"Image" means "an individual's hopes, memories, experiences, values, ideas—in short an individual's mental map of the world."

Source: Lee Odell and Charles R. Cooper, Describing Responses to Works of Fiction, Research in the Teaching of English 10 (Winter 1976): 210-213.

strategies John does not use and the situations in which he does or does not employ a certain maneuver. For example, "He never contrasts two or more texts. He rarely contrasts two characters within a text; less than 16% of the total number of contrasts fall into this category, and most of these are used in describing some aspect of each of the three novels. And even these instances are limited."[16] The data also give them the basis for such statements as, "The total number of references to change is less than half the total number of references to contrast or classification."[17] What Odell and Cooper are finally interested in, then, are patterns in John's thinking processes, patterns which allow them to characterize the idiosyncracies of John's responses to the texts.

Significance and Implications

While the Odell and Cooper method is too detailed and complex to be useful in schools or libraries on a daily basis, the kinds of findings made through this analytical system are valuable in advancing the general understanding of response. Because of the descriptive nature of the data produced by this technique, the Odell and Cooper system will not aid researchers to explain response at the present time; yet, these kinds of data may contribute to the search for explanation in the future. As is the case with the physical sciences, pure research with the immediate goal of producing increasingly finer description of a given phenomenon often leads to the synthesis of significant conclusions about it. Certainly deeper scrutiny of the response artifact is a legitimate activity for researchers even if the eventual value of that scrutiny is not immediately apparent.

Odell and Cooper do suggest one practical application for their work in tracing the changes in a reader's response patterns over time.[18] Sufficient documentation of such change would in effect constitute a concrete definition of growth relative to literary response. Such definition would, of course, be an important contribution with many implications for the classroom.

The Odell and Cooper data may also shed some light on the previously mentioned question surrounding individual consistency in response. Analysis of the data collected through the Purves statement classification system alone reveals that all three of John's response essays flow from "personal" statements to statements of "description" and finally to statements of "interpretation."[19] This observation is clearly indicative of structural consistency in the responses of this individual and therefore an important although not unusual finding. Through employment of the Odell and Cooper model, consistency in the use of intellectual strategies by respondents could also be further explored as well as the question of whether changes in a respondent's use of particular statement types à la Purves automatically signal variation in the intellectual strategies with which he constructs those statements.[20]

Placing the work of Odell and Cooper alongside Petrosky's study raises the exciting possibility of further detailing Piaget's theory of cognitive development with data about intellectual strategies. Since Odell and Cooper and Petrosky all deal with stage-specific characteristics, the two studies may complement each other with the findings of one corroborating the findings of the other. Scanning the transcripts of the Petrosky tapes for patterns of intellectual strategies might be revealing just as analyzing John's cognitive maneuvers in terms of Formal and Concrete Operations may yield information about his developmental stage. The identification by all three meta-readers of the intellectual strategy (or Concrete Operation) of "classification" in the responses of their adolescent subjects is one obvious point of overlap between these investigations which suggests that more subtle parallels may exist. Information about the specific patterns of intellectual strategies which characterize the periods of Formal and Concrete Operations could certainly be compiled by coordinating the methods of Petrosky and Odell and Cooper.

Another similarity between the work of Petrosky and Odell and Cooper is that these three investigators are interested in the topical structure or sequential progression of their subjects' responses. Petrosky's findings about the flow of the individual and group responses from more concrete to less concrete issues corresponds with Odell and Cooper's finding that John's responses progress from statements of engagement to the more abstract statements of interpretation. Although Petrosky reports that the last step in the group discussions is often the sharing of personal recollections and opinions, the participants still attempt to deal first with that which they can understand through their own experience and establish as an agreed-upon foundation for the rest of the conversation. Like Odell and Cooper's subject, Petrosky's subjects also tackle interpretive material last in their group sessions.

Three issues dealt with in the other studies presented here which are conspicuously absent from Odell and Cooper's are: (1) consideration of the subjective or objective nature of the text, (2) identification of and explanation for misapprehensions of the text by the subject, and (3) concern about the influence which the investigator's personality and the immediate circumstances surrounding the data collection situation may have on the response.

As is to be expected considering the intent of this study, much more attention is given here to the way John composes his statements than to the personal thematic significance of what he wrote. Holland and Petrosky, on the other hand, are far more concerned with the actual content of the responses they gathered. Little can be understood about John's overall way of viewing the world from the type of data analysis done by Odell and Cooper.

Regarding the issue of affect in response, one of the questions originally posed by Odell and Cooper is, "What habits of thinking and feeling underly [sic] . . . [John's] response?"[21] In a footnote to their introductory remarks about intellectual strategies they add: "We are using 'intellectual' in the broadest sense of 'cognizing': simultaneous intellecting and feeling. The scheme we propose can be used to describe all aspects of response to fiction, statements of personal engagement as well as of interpretation."[22]

Despite these words of concern about feeling, the major thrust of this investigation is clearly toward describing the mental operations involved in response and only negligible attention is given to John's "habits of . . . feeling." The lack of emphasis placed on the subjective, connotative value of the respondent's essays by Odell and Cooper is not surprising since their study offers a more rigorously systematized, detailed examination of the response artifact itself than any of the other investigations examined here. Just as Holland and Petrosky record the general positive or negative nature of their subjects' reactions to the texts, Odell and Cooper also make only an indirect use of John's feeling when they note that: "Though he made no direct statement of evaluation, there is a clear sense from the response that he found . . . [a particular text] 'good', that he values it and considers it an important reading experience.[23]

V. DAVID BLEICH: SUBJECTIVE CRITICISM

The subtle, finely textured discussion of response presented by David Bleich in Subjective Criticism (1978) is as challenging and provocative as it is controversial, original and rich with philosophical implication. Through his examination of written response artifacts, Bleich dissects the phenomenon of reaction into its smallest components and then subjects each component to a microscopic analysis from several points of view. As a consummate meta-reader and a follower of Louise Rosenblatt, Bleich focuses on a single reading experience as it takes shape in a reader's unique intellectual and emotional system at a particular time under a particular set of circumstances. More than the other investigators covered in this presentation, he also directs much of his attention to the nature of literary interpretation and the means by which readers share their responses.

Before Bleich's ideas are examined more closely, a caveat is offered concerning the abundance of original terminology in his writing and the syntactic intricacy of some of his statements. Of course an attempt has been made here to provide definition and interpretation wherever they are needed. Despite the esoteric nature of some of

Bleich's ideas, however, no report of response research would be complete without them.

Several times during his extended discussion Bleich defines his highly subjective stance by emphasizing that he seeks to understand the individual's response to an esthetic object and not the object itself.[1] In his words, "The subjective mode of understanding supposes a conscious shift of perceptual and ratiocinative priority to the undisputable experiences of the mind and a devaluation of essences presumed to exist outside of mental functioning."[2] Consistent with this idea is the concept that the affective and associative core of response can not be captured unless the respondent himself and not just the investigator is willing to move his attention from that which stimulated the reaction to the reaction occurring within his own mind. "The fundamental act in the recording of response is shifting the mind's objectifying capacity from the symbolic object to one's self, the subject."[3] Not surprisingly, Bleich also believes that " . . . for all practical purposes, reality is invented and not observed or discovered by human beings."[4]

Proceeding on the principle of reader self-awareness, Bleich analyzes four small groups of "written, essay-length response statement[s]."[5] Through his examination of these essays he probes into the construction of literary meaning, the formation and development of taste, the influence of the reader's concept of "the author" on response and the role of interpersonal relationships and circumstantial contexts in determining reader reaction. The four analytical sections of Subjective Criticism are introduced by several chapters in which Bleich outlines his epistemological theory (including a discussion of the nature of symbolic language), presents his concept of the phenomenon of literary interpretation, and makes observations about the classroom situation and the influence of pedagogy on literary response.

Bleich notes the ephemeral quality of reader reaction when he writes that " . . . the actual reading experience is as unsusceptible of recording as the actual dream; . . . [or] memory . . . "[6] He captures this fragility in his unusual definition of response as "an expression of, and declaration of, self in a local context reflecting a set of local choices, motives, and interests in knowledge."[7] It will become apparent in the course of this discussion that his use of the word "local" in this statement is significant in distinguishing his approach from Holland's holistic one.

As was mentioned on p. 5 (above), Bleich not only looks at response a little differently from most meta-readers, but he challenges as "inadequate" the "two main sets of [epistemological] assumptions"[8] which he sees as underlying most previous attempts to understand the phenomenon. From Bleich's point of view, in studies based on the first set of assumptions " . . . the response to a work of literature is isolated as an object of study and treated either as an independently analyzable item or as a member of a class of responses that is analyzed statistically."[9] According to Bleich this treatment of response is not productive because response cannot be isolated from the "local context" or immediate situation in which it is experienced. Bleich's definition of response (cited immediately above) reflects his concern with the circumstances surrounding the reader at the time of the reading experience.

Bleich's objection to the second set of assumptions rests on his epistemological designation of a text as a "symbolic object" which, like a painting or piece of music, cannot be perceived without being interpreted or individualized by the perceiver. It is Bleich's original way of defining the text and his emphasis on local context in determining response which make his outlook unique. Bleich views the phenomenon of reader reaction very differently from Holland and other meta-readers who "conceive . . . of response as the outcome of a relationship or transaction between a reader and a text, where the text is considered a real object."[10] More will be said about "real objects" and "symbolic objects" in the third section of this chapter concerning Bleich's epistemology.

In addition to redefining response and developing a new epistemological foundation upon which to base his theories, Bleich also distinguishes himself from the other meta-readers discussed here in three ways: (1) he enlightens his subjects about their own responses, (2) he gives the respondents more information about his goals in doing the study, and (3) he focuses more heavily on his relationship with them than do Holland, Petrosky or Odell and Cooper.[11] Bleich establishes the value to the subjects of both the study and the classroom work he did with them when he states, " . . . it is of significant interest in general to be able to observe oneself coming to a judgment and to be able, retrospectively, to trace out its path."[12] As part of his analysis of how judgments about texts are synthesized, Bleich attempts to understand the feelings stimulated in each individual during a reading "in terms of . . . [their] perceived historical role in [that reader's] personality."[13] While Holland concentrates his examination on observable current personality patterns, Bleich examines associative strings or memories evoked by the reading to reconstruct the unique features of an individual's experience with the text.

Central to Bleich's probings into the intricacies of response is his analysis of the process of literary interpretation. As he often does in his book, Bleich protests heatedly against what he sees as common misconceptions about reading, responding, and the evaluation of literature. Turning his attention to professional critics, Bleich attempts to expose both their delusions about the "objectivity" of their literary interpretations and their conscious or unconscious denial of the subjective aspect of their own reactions:

> It is always "man" that a work of literature reflects, or a fictitious figure that it describes. The fact that this work, when read, becomes a reflection of a particular reader is left out of consideration. Those discussing a work usually pretend that they did not experience it in a direct emotional way. By rendering a reading experience as representative of a general human principle, they omit the subjective immediacy of this experience to them, the readers.[14]

For Bleich, only when a reader recognizes the subjective dimension of his own response is he free to interpret a text in the most informed and intelligent manner. Bleich's model for effective literary criticism is based on the concept that it is precisely the reader's feelings which motivate him to express a specific opinion about a text and that denying these feelings tends to blur the reader's perceptions. Speaking of either the literary critic or the nonprofessional reader Bleich writes:

> The occasion of interpretation is the work's effect on him [the reader]; the purpose of interpretation is to explain this effect to himself; a satisfactory explanation will name the artists's [or author's] intention. In this argument, the work of art corresponds to a dream; the artist's intention, to the wish motivating the dream. If the artist's original intention is recovered, both the meaning of the work and its effect are explained.[15]

Continuing the analogy between literary interpretation and dream interpretation, Bleich identifies a point of potential confusion on the part of the literary critic between the critic's own motives or feelings and those of "the author":

> *The motive articulated by the interpretation was the motive for the interpretation and not the dream.* The wish in question motivates the interpreter(s) to *name* that wish; the conception of the dream as a fulfilled wish is an adaptive resymbolization of the dream experience [in subjective linguistic form]. This produces the illusion that the wish actually caused the dream.[16]

When Sigmund Freud identified the defense mechanism called "projection" he also recognized this process of mistaking one's own feelings for those of another person (in this case the author of a given text). In statements like the one just quoted Bleich achieves a level of depth and subtlety in his description of the tangled complexities of reader reaction beyond that evident in the work of the other meta-readers covered in this presentation. (Of course this level of subtlety does not guarantee the accuracy of the insights.)

Evident in Bleich's discussion is also an unusually strong emphasis on raw affect as it occurs. It has been shown in chapters 2 through 4 that while the emotional aspect of response is recognized by the other investigators, it is dealt with rather perfunctorily by them in the studies discussed here. Bleich manifests his more intense focus on feeling, for example, when he characterizes the impetus behind the interpretive act this way: " *. . . interpretation . . . is motivated and organized by the conscious desires created by dishar-*

monious feeling and/or self-images; the goal of these desires is increasing the individual's sense of psychological and social adaptability."[17]

Cognition, Affect and Theoretical Background

In his preliminary discussion of affect and cognition Bleich deals with the points of compatibility and incompatibility among the theories of Freud, Piaget and Noam Chomsky, the well-known linguist. As the originator of the system of transformational grammar, Chomsky, like Piaget, also studied the stages of intellectual growth as they apply to the mysterious process of language acquisition.

Contrary to Petrosky's and Piaget's view that affective and cognitive development occur simultaneously and are inextricably connected, Bleich notes that " . . . the psychoanalysts . . . who have been studying affective development, have been meeting difficulty in relating conceptualizations of affective life to the cognitive considerations of Piaget and Chomsky."[18] He adds, " . . . while there is no contradiction between the affective and cognitive developmental schedule, neither has there been demonstrated any decisive correspondence or interaction."[19] This view challenges Petrosky's synthesis of Freudian and Piagetian thought.

Bleich's theoretical separation of affect and cognition facilitates the concentration on feeling in the analysis of his data and allows him to explore the causative interaction between emotion and thought. While Bleich's own description of the interpretive process rests firmly on the idea that unconscious and conscious affect influences expressed "objective" opinions or thoughts, he also mentions that "Neither Piaget nor Chomsky . . . view [sic] affective development as being a determining feature of cognition."[20]

Although Bleich differs from Petrosky in his concept of the relationship between affect and cognition, he shares the subjective view of reality with his fellow meta-reader and notes Piaget's stance that knowledge is actively constructed rather than simply discovered.[21] Bleich also considers his own theories in the light of the work of I. A. Richards whom he cites as a supporter of the concept that affect does in fact strongly influence cognition. Speaking of Richards, Bleich writes;

> He further argued that it is the job of critics to present value judgments and that such judgments derive from the subjective economy of appetites and drives. He maintained that psychology is indispensible if we are to understand the human interest in literature.[22]

In his prefatory remarks Bleich traces the quest to establish the relationship between affect and interpretation through the studies of two earlier response researchers, James R. Squire, whose work is discussed in this presentation on pages 14 and 16, and James R. Wilson. In Bleich's opinion, both of these researchers flirt with important insights about the affective roots of interpretation but are too constrained by the scientific and statistical rigors of their content analysis methods to pursue the questions about feeling that their respective studies raise. Bleich also paints them as being hampered by lack of an epistemological system which would free them from the necessity to compile objective data. Bleich says of Squire:

> The epistemological standards of precise measurement and easily interpretable evidence prevented Squire from making use of the elaborate materials he had compiled. His intuitive attentions to response and its subjective character were ultimately inhibited by his sense that there was no way to extract conclusive knowledge from the natural sources and manifestations of response and interpretation. As a result, Squire concluded that "literary analysis" remained the pedagogical goal and response only a possible subordinate function.[23]

Despite the philosophical limitations Bleich attributes to the studies of Squire and Wilson, he sees their observations and the inferences which they begin to draw from what they observed as being in agreement with his own insight that "interpretation is predicated on [the emotional] response."[24] As far back as the 1960s Wilson expressed the following concept, for example:

> . . . an initial self-involvement is necessary for effective interpretational processes. Perhaps most subjects can begin to concern themselves only with questions which have personal importance. That is to say, interpretation may be a secondary predicative process, impossible without initial self-involvement.[25]

Unlike Bleich, Wilson stops speculating about affect and interpretation at this point, the very point at which the later researcher begins his inquiry.

Bleich also sees the prolific and well-recognized statement classification expert, Alan Purves, as being shackled by the same epistemological limitations which constrain Squire and Wilson. Bleich characterizes the philosophical underpinnings of Purves's investigations as "similar to Wilson's, but less responsive than Wilson's to the complexity of the issue, and thus less attentive to the subjective experience of reading."[26] The author of Subjective Criticism completes his assessment of Purves's contribution, however, by adding that, "Purves's program represents the limit of what can be achieved in the study of response without revising the commonsense attitude that both the responding subject and the aesthetic object may be conceived as real objects."[27]

Epistemological System

Bleich divides the way we experience the world and ourselves into three qualitatively different types of "perceptual initiatives." According to his system, everything around us is processed through our senses and our brains as either a "real object," a "symbolic object" or a "person." Underlying these perceptual modes is the "subjective perspective" through which an individual decides to view an object as real or symbolic, or as a person.[28] The relationship between real and symbolic objects is explained in the following rather intricately structured passage:

> A real object by definition, is not variable. Its reality lies precisely in the fact of the community's universal agreement about it. For a multitude of objects, there is no reason to dispute their objective reality. Insofar as they are not a subject of dispute, however, they are functionally nonexistent. According to the assumptions of the objective paradigm, this argument is an absurdity, since, by assumption, real objects are the absolute standard of reality; and the reality of any item or process is determined by the same sensorimotor tests which establish real objects. The subjective paradigm says that the level of primary reality is symbolic because that is how the organ of consciousness functions. Consciousness takes real objects for granted and directs its efforts either toward symbolic manipulation of real objects or toward symbolic manipulation of objects of its own creation--symbolic objects. In either case, reality is defined symbolically.[29]

In other words, human beings accept as reality that which they can agree upon--that which seems physically tangible; but each of us devotes minimal attention to what he assumes to be real and spends most of his mental energy on applying highly connotative symbols in the form of language to real objects outside himself or to thoughts and feelings within himself. This relentless, almost involuntary process of symbolizing our experience is so pervasive that it in fact determines what we call real. The particular "perceptual initiative" in force at any given time depends on the "subjective perspective" or perceptual selection process of the individual experiencing an object at a specific moment. It is the "subjective perspective" which determines whether an individual is engaging in simple automatic intake of a real object or is actually interpreting the object as a symbolic entity. Bleich elaborates on the difference between perception of real and symbolic objects when he writes:

> . . . one does not interpret a table or a chair unless it is mentally removed from its functional context--the context in which no one questions its existence or purpose--and conceived as a symbolic object, an item of deliberate contemplation. . . . That is, aesthetic objects seem to function as real objects, with the exception that they are directly susceptible to interpretation. The aesthetic object has many of the trappings of the real object, its tangibility, and its manifest reality to almost every test of perception. When an interpretation is presented in terms of these real features of the aesthetic object, the interpretation seems to be just an intelligent description of the object, much as a table may be described as a flat surface elevated from the ground by four legs. But as we are equally well aware, such descriptions of aesthetic objects do not finally pass for interpretations, which are judgments of meaning . . . Ultimately, an aesthetic object is symbolic, and there is no recourse but to think of it that way.[30]

Any perception which comes to us in linguistic form is automatically a symbolic object even though it will also have "real object" features (e.g. the language will travel on sound waves or through hand signs, etc.). According to Bleich, one cannot perceive language "objectively" (free of connotative value) which renders words immediately symbolic. When we discuss symbolic objects like paintings, we do it through what Bleich calls "resymbolization"--a process of applying connotative symbolic language to objects which already have high connotative value. In Bleich's words:

> Reality is explained by resymbolization, which is the conceptualization of symbolized objects and

> processes in terms of subjective motives. . . . In understanding an act of interpretation as a resymbolization, I have presupposed that a symbolization is always the occasion of interpretation.[31]

Bleich explains his hypotheses about how we see "persons" in the following passage:

> Unlike the perception of real objects and symbolic objects, the perception by people of other people is negotiated with those people--not always, of course, but in any consequential context. People are "real," by universal agreement, but often they are only symbols, as when we live only with memories of people, or images of them. Most of the important people in our lives are cosubjects of our experience, and we confer reality onto them and then continuously renegotiate this reality with them. These negotiations are the ultimate authority for which objects are real and which symbolic and which communities shall be formed. In this way the subjective paradigm defines cognition.[32]

Bleich, like Petrosky, includes in the scope of his study investigation into how collective perception influences individual response and the way that readers decide what a text is all about. He also delves into the "negotiable" or shared dimension of response which manifests itself as interpretation. In Bleich's words,

> Subjective criticism proposes that when the object of attention is symbolic, the attempt to explain that object is necessarily a subjective (and intersubjective) reconstruction of our own perceptions of the object. To construct a literary meaning is to explain a spontaneous perception and the means of understanding it in the same act.[33]

Bleich elucidates the term "intersubjective" when he writes,

> The regulating principle for symbolic objects is usually subjective, while the corresponding principle for persons is intersubjective or negotiative pursuant to each individual's subjective value of the relationship. A reader's repeated returns to

> the text are subjectively motivated, while a person's pursuit of a conversation is intersubjectively guided.[34]

In essence, then, perception of people depends on our interactions with them and the nature of those interactions depend in turn on the personal significance which a particular individual has for us. Of key importance here is the idea that the nature of any given intersubjective negotiation (or "dialectic" in Petrosky's terms) is heavily determined by the subjective conscious or unconscious reaction of each participant to the other. For Bleich, no such interaction or its effects on the people involved can be considered apart from the subjective value which the two (or more) people have for each other.

He applies this intersubjective principle to his own investigation by considering the kinds of responses his subjects give in the light of their relationship with him. Rarely does he lose sight of the fact that he is their teacher and he explores ways in which this fact influences the responses they give. Bleich sees relationships as the point of origination and locus for feeling; therefore he places emphasis on identifying current and past relationships in a respondent's life which may contribute to the explanation of why that reader reacts as he does at a given moment.[35]

As important as the influence of relationships on response is the influence of the immediate circumstantial situation in which the reaction is expressed. Also, according to Bleich, in analyzing response (a resymbolization of a symbolic object) the investigator must take into account the current events of the respondent's life as well as the entire cultural and social context in which the response is given. The author of Subjective Criticism illustrates his point with the following comparison:

> Symbolic objects are related to one aspect of one species; to treat such objects as having an independent history would be something like trying to systematize the development of dog food from carrion to Alpo without reference to the dogs' general living conditions.[36]

Expressed response is the resymbolization of a symbolic object (the text) and is by its very linguistic nature laden with collective and individual connotative meaning--meaning which can only be interpreted through focus on the personal, interpersonal and cultural context from which it was distilled.

As will be seen in the following section, Bleich's epistemological system allows him to look at both the expressed response itself and the text somewhat differently than do the other meta-readers. If one accepts this theory of human perception, the treatment of the text by other meta-readers can be viewed as an oversimplification or inaccurate reduction of a symbolic object (the text) to a real object. Paraphrasing an idea from a 1970 article by the response theorist Stanley Fish and adding a comment of his own Bleich states:

> Fish shows that when we symbolize a symbolic object as a real object, the result is an illusion. This passage also implies what I would state explicitly--that the motive for maintaining this illusion is the comfort in the palpability of an item which, in its definitive functions, is imaginary.[37]

The implications of these philosophical positions for response research will be elucidated through the discussions below.

Definition of Text and Response

As is to be expected, Bleich's definition of response is couched in the unique terminology of his epistemological system. According to the author of *Subjective Criticism* " . . . response, like a text, is a symbolic object and may be understood to be the text as immediately and evaluatively perceived."[38]

Tying response in with the previously described role of affect in an interpretation, Bleich also points out " . . . that interpretation as an explanatory procedure is motivated by the first perceptual initiatives toward a symbolic object, and I am identifying these initiatives as subjective *response*."[39] In this statement the "perceptual initiatives" or "subjective *response*" is equated with the foundation of feeling which Bleich sees as an underlying component of literary judgment. Bleich's characteristic concern with the emotional aspect of response is as evident in the foregoing quotation as it is in his other comments about interpretation discussed above. Bleich's persistent focus on the affective component of reader reaction coupled with his identification of response as a symbolic object give him an original perspective from which to view the response phenomenon and redefine it. He further theorizes that "If response is conceived as an initial and largely peremptory symbolization of a reading experience, its affect is a visible form of valuation that cannot be separated from the perception or the uncensored rendition of this perception."[40]

Bleich's philosophical consideration of the text reflects the same tendency toward refinement and detail as his treatment of response. He characterizes the text as "a highly complex predication which came about as a result of the author's effort to enlarge or consolidate his sense of self at that moment and at that developmental phase of his life."[41] To clarify the relationship between text, response and literary interpretation he writes, " . . . the response, not the text is the symbol that the interpretation resymbolizes."[42] Basic to the approach outlined in Bleich's book is the idea that the text, as a symbolic object, can only be seen by the reader subjectively through the individual's own recognized or unrecognized response and that no reader can directly capture in language an objective rendition of the author's words. According to Bleich's system, it is possible, however, for the reader to perceive and communicate his own reaction to the work at hand more directly than he can perceive or discuss the text itself. Bleich elaborates:

> Symbols are the subjective correlatives of experience, just as the name myself is the symbol of the feeling and awareness of self. Because the reader is actually dealing with his symbolization of the text, knowledge of the reading experience has to begin with that subjective dialectic. The most that a reader can do with the real object, the text, is to see it. Readers of the same text will agree that their sensorimotor experience of the text is the same. They may also agree that the nominal meaning of the words is the same for each of them. Beyond these agreements, the only consensus about a text is on its role as a symbolic object, which means that further discussion of this text is predicated on each reader's symbolization and resymbolization of it. These two actions by the reader convert the text into a literary work. Therefore, discussion of the work must refer to the subjective syntheses of the reader and not to the reader's interaction with the text.[43]

The foregoing statement is particularly helpful in distinguishing Bleich's picture of the text from that of Holland and Petrosky because in it Bleich rejects the paradigm of text-reader interaction to which these other meta-readers subscribe. The objection Bleich raises to Holland's approach rests firmly on what he sees as the latter's epistemological misapprehension of the text as a real object. Bleich interprets Holland's position this way:

> For Holland, the mentation involved in the way we relate to stones, books, and people is identical: we transact them. In Holland's view, verbal meaning in a text constrains response in the same way that a stone constrains one's foot; the objectivity of each is recognized as independent and then it is "added" to oneself. From the viewpoint of subjective epistemology, there is a different sort of motive at work when we handle these three types of

> experience, and in each instance the motive is located unambiguously in the subject or in the community of subjects.[44]

Bleich takes the most radical stance of the meta-readers discussed here concerning the range of meanings that can be legitimately attributed to a text. Responding to Holland's previously cited statement about the limits to which "A Rose for Emily" can be interpreted without "doing violence" to the text (p. 46, above), Bleich writes:

> It is not a matter of dispute or interpretation whether Emily is an Eskimo or a salesgirl. But if someone _says_ Emily is an Eskimo, this is an act of interpretation that can easily have meaning to an Eskimo. Holland is assuming that Emily _is_ this or that; there are interpretations of _Hamlet_ which _say_ Hamlet is a woman; everyone understands that such interpretations are given over and above his putative designation as a man, since no one disputes the nominal designation. From a subjective standpoint, there is truth value in any such seriously-given reading, and to moralistically claim violations of the text is only an attempt to say that one's own objectification is more authoritative than someone else's. At the same time, the text cannot thus be understood as constraining, except in a trivial sense. The prior agreement by a community of readers to accept _this_ text transfers all constraining action to the community and its motives in handling its language.[45]

(Bleich's view of the role which collective consensus plays in the establishment of meaning will be discussed in the concluding sections of this chapter.)

In terms of the critical evaluation of literature, Bleich again takes what some would call an extreme position when he explains in an extended footnote that all "books" have some value for some people. By comparing literature to a machine and literary effect to mechanical function Bleich makes this point:

> Since literature may reasonably be the subject of an indefinite number of mental functions there is no way to say that it is intrinsically disfunctional, only, that some readers in some contexts do not like it, while others in other contexts do. When the development of taste becomes a disciplined activity, one finds mental benefit in an ever-increasing variety of works; knowledge of one's own taste greatly increases its versatility.[46]

According to Bleich, then, there really is no such thing as a worthless book or "disfunctional book" since, in his words,

> I have found that, placed in a perspective suitable for me, the 'worst' book can provide great interest. When I do not like a work as a 'good yarn' or great thought or a moving lyric, it usually becomes just as engaging as a biographical document or an object of mass appeal.[47]

The author of Subjective Criticism also gives a reader-oriented rather than text-oriented explanation for the popularity of such literary giants as Shakespeare. For Bleich, the inordinate amounts of attention which certain writers have attracted can be explained through scrutiny of the tastes of those reading the works and not through examination of the texts themselves:

> To explain Shakespeare's popularity from a subjective viewpoint involves defining elements of Western civilization that need to hear Shakespeare or that need to think of him as "great". Shakespeare's work has become a common language in our civilization, and the understanding of his popularity lies more in how and why this language has been so widely appropriated than in some essential objective feature of his work. To a large extent, this appropriation must be due to the prevailing psychology of literary

> authority as it has been passed through generations. It is conceivable that Western civilization and languages might develop in such a manner as to reject the greatness of Shakespeare, which is, in principle, as ephemeral as the absolute truth of Newton's laws of motion.[48]

Methods and Procedures

Although resymbolization was defined briefly in the section concerning the perception of symbolic objects (p. 118), a more in-depth explanation of the process is offered here as part of the description of the specific procedures Bleich followed with his subjects. As the author of Subjective Criticism makes clear in the following statement, what he calls resymbolization is a routine affective and cognitive function carried out by groups and individuals on a daily basis:

> Symbolization occurs in the perception and identification of experiences; resymbolization, when the first acts of perception and identification produce in us a need, desire, or demand for explanation. This conception of explanation is consistent . . . with acts of historical, philosophical, and literary explanation; and with artistic and religious activity. Resymbolization is governed by subjective factors only. A community of thinkers is both the original synthesizer and the final authority for the resymbolization and its ranges of applicability and value. An adequate explanation may or may not meet the criteria of predictability or repeatability. But if the community finds the explanation satisfactory for its own needs, this alone is enough to render it adequate.[49]

A defining feature of resymbolization is its heavy connotative meaning both for those producing it and those perceiving it. Indeed, its very value lies in the fact that "Resymbolization rewords (or reworks) established symbols in a direction more adaptive to present needs."[50] The interactions of Petrosky's "community" of subjects in their discussions of the texts exemplify just such a synthesis of a "customized" reality through linguistic (symbolic) exchange. Of course, an integral part of resymbolization is the affect which underlies and initiates the process. According to Bleich, any meaningful analysis of written or spoken resymbolization must address the "motivational" or affective energy behind it. In Bleich's words:

> The idea of resymbolization is both an explanation of language use and an explanation of explanation. It explains the linguistic report of facts in terms of the motives of the reporter, and it explains the accepted explanation of acts in terms of the motives of those seeking the explanation. . . . My linguistically articulated response to a work of art is just as much a symbolic explanation of experience as are Newton's laws of motion. The structure of motivation in each case is different, but both explanations are motivated resymbolizations.[51]

The key concept again is the subjective nature of any linguistic activity as determined by the unique internal and external circumstances surrounding that particular interpretive act.

The challenge which Bleich sets for himself in analyzing the resymbolizations of his subjects is to discover the affective and cognitive "motivations" behind their interpretations. In a more traditional critical setting these feelings or "motivations" are often objectified by the reader and experienced only as features of the text. Unlike traditional readers, Bleich's subjects are trained to identify the feelings they have during a reading experience as products of their own memories, associations and current predispositions. In Freudian terms, Bleich's students are much less likely than untrained readers to "project" their feelings on to the text and express those emotions as absolute, factual statements about the work at hand. From the viewpoint of the subjective critic, factually worded, text-directed interpretations are not helpful in advancing the reader's understanding of his own reactions because they reflect little or no awareness of the feelings which the reader has while reading.

Bleich attempts to get as close as he can to the feelings which "motivate" his readers' subsequent interpretive statements about a text through examination of written associative strings recorded by the subjects after the reading experience. Through these associative strings, both investigator and subject are able to identify relationships and circumstances which evoke emotions in the reader similar to or reminiscent of the ones experienced in reaction to the text. The analysis of the strings allows Bleich and his subjects to understand the affective significance of the text to a particular reader in terms of that individual's personal "historical" experiences. For Bleich, then, "The use of perception, affect, and association as means of determining interpretive responsibility is rooted in the normal function and psychology of language."[52]

To demonstrate the relationship between the feelings which accompany a response itself and the kind of interpretive assertions traditionally made by students, Bleich taught his subjects to write three different kinds of statements for each reading experience: (1) a "response statement," (2) a "meaning statement," and (3) an analysis of the response statement. Bleich then juxtaposed these qualitatively distinct statements and eventually presented a selection of them for discussion in Subjective Criticism. Approximately twelve full-length essays representing these three statement types are reproduced in their entirety in Bleich's book along with excerpts from numerous other essays written by his college-level students. (Occasionally a single essay represents a combination of two kinds of statements.)

Heavily composed of associations and feelings, the response statement most closely approximates the reader's immediate and recollected experience with the text. The meaning statement, on the other hand, is characterized by an assortment of more traditional "objective" comments about the text which begin with such familiar phrases as "the novel means"[53] and end with garden-variety pronouncements about philosophical implications or hidden meanings. In the third type of essay the subject himself explores his own response statement and draws connections between it and his perceptions of the literature. Through this process the subject can come to an understanding of his personal literary tastes.[54] The response statement analysis "is a resymbolization of the response statement, which was, in its turn, a symbolization of the reading experience."[55] In Bleich's words, the response statement itself differs from the meaning statment because the writer of the response statement "tries to objectify, to . . . [himself] and then to . . . [his] community, the affective-perceptual experience, rather than the story."[56] The successful response statement captures the individuality in a reader's reaction because it "particularizes known systems of thought [language] and gives a motivational ground to a particular reader's understanding and use of that system [in literary interpretation]."[57] While the response statement reveals the etiology of reaction, the meaning statement actually masks it because the latter mode of expression deals with characteristics of the text in "objective" terms which ignore the "psychological import"[58] of the work to the reader.

Bleich further subdivides response statements into three categories reflecting the success with which the statement reveals the reader's actual experience with the text. Those statements which are most valuable in tracing reaction are characterized by Bleich as being "negotiable" and are classified as "experience-oriented."[59] In "negotiable" statements a reader meticulously records both the associations stimulated by the text and his feelings about a literary "figure, sentence or piece of fictional behavior."[60] Prerequisite to the writing of a usable "experience-oriented" statement is the reader's high motivation to capture and share his response coupled with sufficient inhibition to express the response with a minimum of censorship. The subject's trust in the person reading the response artifact is also important as is the articulateness with which the response is symbolized into a statement. Less helpful in penetrating the mysteries of literary taste and judgment are response statements in which the reader discusses himself to the exclusion of the text ("reader-oriented"), and those in which the reader treats the text as "proof" for statements he makes about it ("reality-oriented").[61] It is in the experience-oriented statement that " . . . the reader's subjective dialectic between the perceived language system [the text] and his own is much more apparent."[62] What Bleich is looking for in his subjects' response statements is a committed personal interaction with the work at hand.

In the light of the foregoing discussion about reportage of thought and feeling, a word should be said about unconscious reader reactions which are not accessible even to the subject himself. In contrast to Holland, Bleich does not concern himself with the unconscious aspect of response and sees this level of analysis as falling outside the purview of a classroom teacher (a professional identity which he shares with his colleague). Bleich states: "Pedagogical concerns do not demand that conscious and unconscious motivation be separated: all motives are retrospectively adduced; therefore they are conscious now, at least."[63] In discussing the "motives" or feelings behind the statements of two of his subjects, Bleich adds " . . . it serves no purpose to assume that the source of these motives is an autonomous unconscious mind."[64]

In addition to the difference in their respective approaches to the unconscious, Holland and Bleich also part company in terms of the relative importance each ascribes to interpersonal relationships in understanding reader response. While Holland does not examine his subjects' relationships per se in 5 Readers Reading, the later investigator places heavy emphasis on them. For Bleich a "negotiable" response statement will lead to discovery of the relationships in the reader's life which stimulate feelings in the individual similar to those stimulated by the text. Bleich explains the role of interpersonal relationships this way: "If both affect and the language that expresses it originate in interpersonal relationships, as I claim they do, the associations will name these relationships and thus complete the subjective definition of the affect."[65] So critical is this function of the response statement, that its very value is in fact determined by the "relative depth of and frequency with which the associations in the response define the affective attitude in terms of personal relationships."[66]

Bleich also ascribes more importance to his relationships with his subjects as an influencing factor in their response than does Holland. In analyzing the response of one subject, "Mr. P," to Henry James's The Aspern Papers, for example, Bleich sees the fact that the student may have been guilty of plagiarizing work for the course earlier in the term as influencing the reader's subsequent interpretation of the text. The following statement contains what Mr. P wrote about James's novel. (The interpolation is Bleich's addition.):

> This [the compromise of values] is not an unusual theme in either literature or in everyday life. The story brings to mind times that I have compromised my values to gain personal ends. However, just as important as the actions taken by the characters and the motives behind those actions is the ending to the story. Each one compromised values they knew to be correct and good and each one lost. I think this is pretty much true of life.[67]

Bleich makes the following comments about the subject's paragraph:

> Mr. P synthesized a moral meaning for James's tale. Without giving particulars, he reports that there is a personal dimension to this meaning. Mr. P also knew that I would be the principal reader of this essay; therefore, it is a communication to me of his personal and literary knowledge in the same statement. It is hard for me to avoid seeing something confessional

> here, especially in the second sentence of the . . . paragraph. But here, too, there is a rationalization: the "most respected people" are vulnerable to this "flaw in our makeup." This is a common rationalization younger people use when they try to do something they know in advance is "wrong:" "You parents and teachers do it; why shouldn't we?" In fact, part of the motive for such behaviors is emulative; it is as much a means of identification as rebellion. Mr. P's final knowledge of the story, as of the principle, is that "each one lost" when he compromised his values.[68]

A more extended example of the possible influence which Mr. P's relationships with his father and with Bleich had on an interpretation of Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" appears in appendix 2 on pp. 204-7.

Theory in Practice

According to the system presented in Subjective Criticism, insight into why an individual reacts to a given text in a certain way at a certain time can be gained by comparing the response statement containing all the personalized material with the meaning statement which does not contain the actual associations and feelings constituting response. The following summary paragraphs excerpted from one of Bleich's extended analytical chapters illustrate how he uses the response statement to elucidate the meaning statement. The subject, Ms. K, had written a meaning statement for Hawthorne's Blithedale Romance, and the letter-number code (e.g. M7) identifies numbered paragraphs from her essay to which Bleich refers. (It should be remembered that the paragraphs have been lifted out of context in the interest of space):

> The meaning statement resymbolizes the . . . complex experiences, recorded in the response, by declaring the role of woman to be that of a passive and submissive wife and mother like Priscilla. Although it seems that Ms. K attributes this view to Hawthorne and his work, the first sentence of paragraph M7 implies some doubts as to whether this is simply Hawthorne's view; perhaps it is a general truth about women. In paragraph M2, she says that the Eliot's Pulpit scene is the "key" to the story; there, it is shown how Zenobia's refusal to accept her "proper role" seems instrumental in her death. Yet in paragraph M5 she notes that the "conflicting qualities within the nature of man and woman" constitute the "most interesting aspect" of the whole issue. Accordingly, Ms. K has difficulty in working Coverdale into her overall construction of meaning: he is a "hard nut to crack" (M6). She accepts his taking himself out of the picture--he is a "chorus"--but she also sees him (in the meaning statement) as a traditional man who wants the "simple, womanly affections" of Priscilla. The source of Ms. K's difficulty is seen in the response statement, which shows how her identification with Coverdale disclosed conflicting sexual feelings in her. The local resolution of this conflict is a meaning which stresses womanhood and its necessarily "flawed" nature, with Coverdale receiving only passing mention. The meaning transfers the central emotional attention of the response into terms just as close to Ms. K's subjective concerns but less expressive of the conflict.
>
> The terms of the meaning construction are fully pursuant to the pedagogical motive of presenting to the classroom community a clear idea of what Ms. K thinks are the cultural and intellectual issues raised by this novel. When the meaning is understood as a resymbolization of the response statement, these issues have a range, depth, and human authenticity that is not available from any purely nonpersonal discourse. But once the personal dimensions of literary meaning constructions are introduced, it is an utter necessity to discipline their presentation; the response statement makes responsible presentation of subjective materials possible.[69]

Beyond finding connections between response statements and meaning statements, Bleich also seeks to make detailed observations about every subtlety of the subjects' experiences with a text. In the following paragraph Bleich theorizes about the path taken by the feelings of one reader, Ms. A, from disgust to sympathy when she reacts to the plight of Gregor in Kafka's Metamorphosis. Again, Bleich inserts numbers in his analysis to identify specific paragraphs in the student's statement. The essay upon which Bleich comments here is a combination meaning and response statement:

> When Ms. A returns again to Gregor in paragraph 12, she first reports in general terms that her sympathy for him "outweighed the happiness of the others in the family" at his death. Most of the paragraph, however, discusses and analyzes why Gregor appeared to her a "snivelling wimp." Although she says it was not his choice to become so, she observes that "his perpetual lack of fighting spirit" makes it difficult for her to sympathize with him. From all of these discussions of Gregor--and especially from the associations they evoke--Ms. A's sympathies appear to be a reaction to her spontaneous feelings of disgust and sadism. When she observes aggression and hostility emerging [in herself], guilt and fear follow immediately, producing her retrospective sense of ambivalence in her overall response.[70]

Of the four meta-reading studies presented here, only in Bleich's investigation is there a high level of subject involvement in data analysis. Indeed, one of the primary goals of Bleich's system is to enlighten readers about their own acts of taste and judgment. The following excerpt from a response analysis statement exemplifies the kind of insights Bleich's methods yield for the reader. The statement was written by a Ms. M about her reaction to James's The Turn of the Screw:

(T1) I first read "The Turn of the Screw" during the semester break when I had been at home with my children for three weeks. In that time I had become frustrated and bored not only with caring for the children, but with the way in which my marriage had quickly slipped back to the way it was when I was permanent housekeeper and babysitter. I associated reading the story with my unpleasant feelings about motherhood and with the guilt accompanying those feelings. Until I began writing this response I was not really aware of the ways in which I reacted to other aspects of the story, and would have said, on the basis of my frustration and guilt that I disliked the story. But, upon reviewing my response in its entirety, and taking into consideration the fact that "The Turn of the Screw" has stayed with me for several months, I have come to the conclusion that fascination, even satisfaction and enjoyment are more accurate terms for my judgment of taste.

(T2) First of all, there is the matter of my identification with the governess which begins before her narrative when she is described as anxious (the way in which I see myself) and when it becomes apparent that it will be her responsibility to care for two children (also my responsibility). The identification becomes enjoyable when the governess does not really turn out to be anxious at all but strong and powerful. My personal associations with the isolation at Bly allow me to continue the identification and thus feel a potential for strength and power within myself . . . .

(T7) "The Turn of the Screw" becomes satisfying, then, in that it allows me to identify with strength, purge some guilt and perhaps displace some personal responsibility. There are likely more elements to explain in my response but in attempting this analysis I have had to work on the premise that the elements I am able to pick out are the most meaningful aspects of my response. I found that the procedure of response analysis required a high degree of objectivity--i.e. treating my response as though it belonged to someone else--before I could subjectively evaluate it. The most difficult part of the analysis was avoiding the temptation to rationalize rather than understand the response. I think that I responded to many of the same aspects of the story that I would have chosen to discuss in a traditionally "objective" paper. The essential difference between the two critical methods is that through a subjective approach I accept responsibility for focusing on particular features of the story and attempt to understand why I have done so.[71]

By systematically pinpointing the actual reading experience and the circumstances surrounding it, Bleich and his subjects jointly discover what they view as reasons for the unique responses of these particular readers. Presumably, then, only through the writing and analysis of response statements do these subjects become aware of some of the previously unrecognized reasons for their literary judgments and acts of taste.

Comparison of Bleich's theories and methods with those of Norman Holland reveals four major areas of disagreement between these two highly philosophical meta-readers. As has been pointed out, the first area of conflict concerns their differing epistemological concepts. While Holland pictures human perception as a continual merging or "inter-twin[ing]" of the objective and subjective perspectives,[72] Bleich regards objectivity and subjectivity as two qualitatively different perceptual modes between which a normal human being alternates as he processes real objects, symbolic objects and persons. For Bleich, Holland's picture of the inextricable bond between objectivity and subjectivity constitutes a theoretically inaccurate "blur[ring]" of symbolic objects and real objects.[73]

A second difference between Holland and Bleich is evident in their respective assessments of the place of the relationship between subject and investigator in both data collection and analysis. Bleich treats his relationship with his subjects as a prominent factor which shapes the way they react to the texts and the way they report those reactions. While Holland does not disregard his personal contact with his five readers, he does not focus upon it to the extent that Bleich emphasizes the interaction between himself and his students. In terms of data analysis, Bleich sees the fact that Holland's subjects are not involved in interpreting their own responses as a significant weakness in 5 Readers Reading.[74] Since Bleich subscribes to the concept that creditable knowledge about a respondent's thoughts or feelings can only be established through a "negotiative relationship between the subject and the interpreter,"[75] he questions the validity of the conclusions Holland draws about the five readers and their responses because these conclusions are reached without participation of the subjects.

Even more significant than these two disputed points is Bleich's challenge of the use of identity themes to elucidate the responses of readers. Bleich's objection to Holland's establishment of the themes for his subjects is two fold: (1) The themes are not established through a cooperative effort between Holland and the subjects, but are developed "objectively" by Holland alone,[76] and (2) A theme with the " . . . far-reaching explanatory power [which] Holland claims for it . . . cannot possibly be developed from so brief and superficial a knowledge of an individual."[77]

The fourth area of divergence between these two meta-readers revolves around the importance Bleich places on the immediate circumstances in a reader's life as a primary variable in response. As Bleich sees it, for a researcher to avoid crossing the thin line between the investigative and clinical realms, he must regard response "as the expression of a local reading experience and as a contribution to a group effort, and not as a reflection of illness or even of character."[78] For Bleich, when Holland makes broad generalizations about the five readers and pays minimal attention to the situations surrounding response, the latter arrives at conclusions which he can not justifiably reach while missing the explanations for response which he should be able to discover. The choices which future meta-readers make between Bleich's and Holland's approaches to these issues will have a significant influence on the kinds of studies done by the next generation of response researchers and will determine whether the holistic mode of data analysis will be abandoned or embraced over the coming decade.

The Subjective Community

An integral part of Bleich's subjective epistemology is the role of the group in establishing what is regarded as reality by its members. In Subjective Criticism truth is defined as "what all parties feel when an interpretation is accepted. Beyond the emotional durability of this feeling and its versatility in situations beyond that of the original interpretation, there is no meaning for truth."[79] Some degree of collective recognition of an idea is indeed the only way that perceptions (including those about literature) can be formally transformed into reality. Bleich states "that interpretations can be authorized by subjective resymbolization and intersubjective negotiation, and by nothing else."[80]

From Bleich's epistemological perspective, reality is a free-floating affair which changes chameleon-like depending on the perceptual background from which it emerges. As is the case with all perceptions, ideas which readers have about an author's "intent" are also determined by collective agreement. Bleich expresses this concept when he says, "To the extent that a community accepts certain motives as the author's, the motives have been objectified and represent knowledge the community synthesized for itself. The community, however, is the only and final arbiter of this knowledge, and it is therefore subjective."[81] When an individual expresses a literary interpretation he does so with an automatic if not totally conscious awareness of the group's presence and collective goals. "Although the resymbolization of a text is usually . . . fully private. . . , it is always done in reference to some communal purpose . . ."[82] So vital is collective "negotiation" to the establishment of ideas that Bleich states, "The degree to which knowledge is not part of a community is the degree to which it is not knowledge at all."[83]

Like Petrosky, Bleich also examines the effects of group thinking on the interpretations of texts by individuals. While Petrosky analyzes taped group discussions, however, Bleich approaches this phenomenon by looking for collectively held ideas in the written responses of individuals. For this part of the study Bleich chose to work with Robert Frost's poem, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" because the poet and his writings are sufficiently well known to be surrounded by shared attitudes and preconceptions. To identify group preconcepts about the poet, Bleich first asked twenty-one college level respondents "to . . . [write down] in a time period of about thirty minutes everything they knew, believed or felt about Frost."[84] From these essays he isolated both mythic and factual concepts about Robert Frost as a person and a poet and about Frost's poems as a body of work. As evidenced by excerpts from these statements, Frost's image is one of a quintessentially American grandfather figure who is wise, has white hair (the last detail mentioned by eight respondents) and who writes simple, comprehensible poetry (cited by six respondents.)[85] Bleich's subjects also associate the poet with Santa Claus, Jack Frost and winter.[86]

In his analysis of one response essay, Bleich demonstrates that the respondent's reaction to "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is a blend of elements traceable to the subject's own subjective history and to the sentimental mist of Frost legend through which the readers view the poet and the text. After having read the general essays about Frost and the responses to the poem itself, Bleich concludes that "For most of these respondents, the 'real' Robert Frost is less important than the imagined poet who ameliorates pedagogical difficulties [by writing simple poems] while encouraging a sense of personal integration into the culture [as a representative of American values]."[87] The meta-reader further observes that "The strong association of 'Stopping by Woods' with the mythic personality of its author has produced an almost equally strong prevailing interpretation of the poem."[88]

Bleich sees the following interpretive paragraph about the poem by his subject, Ms. J, as expressive of both her individual associations with the work and "the [group's] collective motivational premium in maintaining . . . [Frost's] benign image [as a soothing, protective, avuncular figure]."[89] Ms. J writes:

> (7) Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" had a terrific impact on me as an adolescent. I was so lonely, even when I was with other people; I felt self-conscious all the time. Lacking confidence, I enjoyed wallowing in my sorrow within the safe and sheltering confines of my own room. I must have read that poem hundreds of times since it

> always made me feel so much better and seemed to tell me that somewhere out there in the lovely, dark deepness of the woods was someone who was experiencing a feeling of loneliness, and yet loving every breathtaking second of the peaceful solitude. He would know how I felt and be my friend. The woods and horse and snow and lake would all be my friends; they would cheer me up. In fact, the poem seemed to cry out, "I know you're lonely but it's O.K. to be lonely; it's a beautiful experience we can share. Trust me."[90]

As is commonly the case with other personal legends, the one surrounding Frost is a rather bland two-dimensional reduction of an infinitely complex and tempestuous person. The essays reveal that Bleich's students convert the multi-faceted, often disturbing reality of the poet's life into a flat, vaguely pleasant fantasy. In the case of Robert Frost, particularly, this fantasy seems more the product of the psychological needs of those creating it than a reflection of the personality of its object. For Ms. J, the poem itself is evocative of an array of pleasing feelings similar to those inspired by the popular Frost legend. Most notable among these feelings is the peaceful, serene quality she attributes to the solitude described in the poem--a quality which helps her to blunt the sharpness of her own loneliness. Her statement also indicates that behind the words of the poem, Ms. J senses an empathetic, comforting presence which she can trust.

As Bleich makes clear in the following comment, in contrast to Ms. J's impressions of the poem, Frost's loneliness was often anything but the unrippled, nourishing experience described in "Stopping by Woods." What Ms. J associates with the poem, however, is drawn not only from her personal needs, but from the gentle haze of semi-fictional characteristics commonly attributed to Frost. In Bleich's words:

> Frost did have white hair, but only when he was old; he did write about winter, but only a small part of the time; and he did have many moments of thoughtful solitude, but usually as a consequence of the severe stresses of loneliness, bitterness, anger, frustration, and impatience with the needs and demands of others. As different as Ms. J's reports are from Frost's personal experiences, her response and Frost's biography each suggest ways in which a trying sense of loneliness is part of collectively held reassuring value this poem is believed to express.[91]

According to the principles of subjective criticism, then, the "reassuring value" which many readers find in the poem represents the combined effect of commonly held notions about the poet, the words in the work itself, and the unique associations of each reader. (Refer to appendix 3 on p. 208 for an extended excerpt from Subjective Criticism in which Bleich describes the interaction between commonly held collective thought about the eighteenth century and personal "motives" in the differing interpretations of the work of Jonathan Swift by two well-known critics.)

Bleich also points to the collective thought/feeling surrounding a work as a variable in the phenomenon of misreading or misconstruing what is read. This approach contrasts both with Holland's, who explains such misunderstandings through the readers' unconscious fantasies or identity theme, and with Petrosky's, who discusses misreading in terms of the stage-specific intellectual abilities of his subjects. Bleich uses his knowledge about the collective thought surrounding Frost's poem to provide insight into a misreading on the part of one subject:

> One of the grounds on which [this] respondent . . . reached the generalization of "thoughtful solitude" for Frost's poems was her understanding of "Stopping by Woods" as presenting the owner "far away" from his woods and "missing the beauty of it." Neither of these perceptions can have been derived from the verbal meaning of the poem, since we are not told if the village is far, and we are told only that the owner "will not see" the speaker. These "errors," however, are consistent with the myth of the poem and with the psychology of the myth. Perceiving the owner as distant emphasizes the speaker's isolation; perhaps, to this respondent, the owner *feels* distant.[92]

One index of the difference between the four investigations is the variation among these meta-readers in their respective interpretations of reader misperception (including the absence of such theorizing from the study of Odell and Cooper).

Professional Critics, Censorship and Biographical Criticism

As was mentioned earlier, the principles underlying subjective criticism challenge the traditional idea that the scholarly critic (not to be confused with the popular reviewer) is able to render an "objective" authoritative interpretation of a work by virtue of professional training and personal discipline. Bleich traces this commonly held attitude to similar concepts about authority which underlie traditional religious and scientific thinking. For Bleich, "common critical practice" combines "the religious assumption that ministers have special access to the absolute truth and the scientistic [sic] assumption that an object of art is independent of human perception."[93]

Of course from the point of view of the subjective critic, the very identity of a literary work as a symbolic object precludes its comprehensibility without the mobilization of individual perceptual motives. (Refer to appendix 3, p. 208.) Bleich's hypotheses, therefore, are in opposition to the so-called "new" criticism of which T. S. Eliot was an exponent and which has had such impact on the teaching of literature over the past twenty years. Since the "new" critics conceive of a literary work "as a document with an internally coherent objective meaning"[94] which can be objectively perceived, they base their approach on a totally different epistemological system than that of the subjective critic. While Bleich never attacks the value of critical opinions based on study and training, he does attempt to expose what he sees as the myth of objective authority, upon which so much of professional criticism rests.

The view of literature as a symbolic object is also counter to the philosophical rationale upon which censorship rests since no symbolic object by its very nature can do harm to its perceiver. In Bleich's words, one person's "Rejection of a symbolic object is a kind of self-censorship, since one is actually rejecting one's resymbolization rather than the object itself. When the object is considered real by those in authority, rejection turns into public censorship."[95] In more conventional language, the danger which the censor sees in some literary works is in the eye of the beholder because the censor's actual experience with the work is very different from that of someone else. Censorship is based on the dual assumption that: (1) the literary work carries a fairly constant meaning which is imbedded in the text rather than synthesized in the reader's mind, and (2) that the experiences of different individuals with a text are all the same or very similar. Both of these concepts are incompatible with the essential message of Subjective Criticism.

While the concepts behind new criticism and censorship are incompatible with those on which subjective criticism is based, Bleich agrees with the traditional justification for doing biographical research into the life of a given author. Because the act of literary interpretation often becomes a quest to uncover the author's "intent" or "what the writer is trying to say," the reader's concept of the author's original motive relative to the work is an integral part of the reader's final perception of that work. Bleich observes that ". . . any reading experience, at some points, in some degrees at least, is marked by the reader's feeling of communicative involvement with the author."[96] He adds that the reader will often attempt to understand the writing of an author through consideration of that author as a uniquely motivated human being in a particular experiential context.

While the foregoing idea is widely accepted (and supported by the continuous existence of biographical criticism as a fixture on the literary scene), Bleich adds a new dimension to it. The author of Subjective Criticism hypothesizes that in the absence of biographical information about a writer, the reader will automatically fantasize about the person who created the literature:

> To the extent that a reader is unfamiliar with the author or his language system, however, he will invent an author as part of the normal activity of response and interpretation. The symbolization of an author is as much a perception of the text as the isolation of formal or thematic units. Increased concentration on the symbolized author serves many familiar psychological functions: localizing one's own feelings and thoughts in someone else; providing a human, motivational origin for novel imaginings; bringing authority into one's reading experience; and so on. Sometimes the cultic reputation of an author is part of the original motive to read his work.[97]

In addition to communal motives and immediate personal needs, then, the reader's factual and imaginary conceptions about the author are also determinants of response and interpretation.

From the point of view of the subjective critic, the reader who is in possession of communally accepted or "authoritative" information about the writer is in a better position to speculate meaningfully about that author's motivations and "intents." Even more importantly, an informed reader is better equipped to separate his own motivations in responding from those he attributes to the person who created the text. (The problem of the degree to which any biographical information about an author can be considered as objective fact will not be addressed here, although Bleich discusses it in his chapter titled "Conception and Documentation of the Author".)

In studying the effect which the possession of biographical knowledge about the author can have on response, Bleich contrasts two response statements to James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. The first statement was written before the subject, Mr. D, had read the biographical information, and the second was written after. Through the exhaustive comparison of the two lengthy statements, Bleich finds evidence that the reader's close identification with the main character/ author of the novel is somewhat "diminished" by reading the biographical information.[98] Bleich also observes that "Once Joyce had become more of a person and less of an image or hero for Mr. D, . . . [the respondent] felt his own role more acutely in his formulation of the reading experience."[99] Bleich expands upon this idea in the following paragraph:

> Between writing the first and second response statements, Mr. D acquired a great deal of new information about Joyce and his work. The important matter is the effect of this new material on him. Of particular concern to him was his understanding that Joyce was extremely egotistical and ambitious, a feature of Joyce's personality that Mr. D had not perceived from his first reading of Portrait. Paragraph 18 of the second response shows the effect of this new image on the reading: he now understood Stephen's modesty as Joyce's false portrayal of himself. Seeing Joyce's artistic manipulations of himself helped to reduce Joyce's heroic stature in Mr. D's eyes. Mr. D relates this artistic detachment to his larger revised image of the writer as being cold and unfeeling, especially toward his parents. This new realization is largely responsible for the affection and sympathy Mr. D shows in the second response toward his mother, and to a lesser degree toward his father. These feelings, in turn, must be the result of a revised self-image. Mr. D's biographical readings made possible a definition of himself as decidedly different from Joyce in items more psychologically germane than their childhood sensitivity and Roman Catholic upbringing. The occasion for the resymbolization of Joyce was the search for that knowledge motivated by the belief that knowing Joyce actually meant knowing himself better. This belief was ultimately justified, but in an unexpected way that left Mr. D feeling somewhat more alone.[100]

Because the acquisition of biographical information can enable the introspective reader to identify the elements of his own responses more successfully, it has a legitimate place in Bleich's subjective approach.

A word should also be said about Bleich's assessment of the usefulness of theory about stage-specific characteristics in understanding taste or reader preferences. Bleich uses the concept of age-associated "emotional preoccupations" only once in his analysis of response and explains in an extended note that use of such characteristics as an analytical tool is most appropriate when the respondents are children.[101] He further states that study of the influence of developmental psychological preoccupations on children's reading preferences and responses provides insight into "the connections between subjectivity and taste" more readily than does such age-oriented analysis of adult reading behavior.[102]

In contrast to the intellectual/cognitive emphasis of the analyses of Petrosky and Odell and Cooper, when Bleich employs age-specific characteristics to explain response, he centers on the emotional rather than mental growth of the reader. Consistent with this shift in emphasis he uses Erik Erikson's eight stage theory of emotional development rather than the ideas of Piaget or Freud. In the responses of one subject to James's The Turn of the Screw, for example, Bleich sees the reader's "long exploration of isolation"[103] in both the novel and her life as a manifestation of the emotional preoccupations which Erikson attributes to individuals between twenty and thirty-five years of age. As a person in this age range, Bleich's subject expresses a concern with aloneness which Erikson identifies as a characteristic of young adults in the "'intimacy/isolation' stage." Bleich qualifies the connection he draws between the subject's age and the themes in her response with the observation that it is "not very enlightening" to correlate growth stage and content of response "on the basis of the [response] statement alone." [104] Yet, the fact that Bleich draws on theory about age characteristics at all is significant for the purposes of comparison with the other studies and as an indicator of possible directions for future research.

VI. SUMMARY

Through the detailed description and comparison of four studies of reader response done in the late 1970s, it has been shown how they are similar and different in scope and intent, structure, methods, theoretical approaches and conclusions. Philosophical and developmental connections between the studies have been noted as well as the unique contributions of each to the body of response research. Further, the influence of the various investigators on each other's work has been documented, and the areas that have been explored by response researchers over a period of approximately three years have been identified. In the following sections the comparisons and contrasts which have been drawn will be summarized and some concluding observations will be made about the studies and the future of response research.

Scope and Intent

In terms of goals and areas of interest the studies of Holland and Bleich are the most ambitious of the four investigations examined here because both of these meta-readers delve deeply into the "hows and whys" of reader reaction. Also, both offer theoretical working models for the response process. Although the studies are similar in these respects, Holland's theory is, of course, based on the ideas of Freud while Bleich's system of "subjective criticism" is an original synthesis built on the work of numerous philosophers and Bleich's own experience with students. Petrosky attempts to explain the responses of specific individuals through Piaget's theory and the concept of personal styles, but he does not generalize about reading as a dynamic process to the extent that the other two meta-readers do. Also, Petrosky does not offer a paradigm or model of reading per se. Odell and Cooper's investigation is the most descriptive and least explanatory of the four. Rather than providing reasons for their subject's responses, these two investigators propose a system of analysis designed to aid response researchers to identify the fine points of a response artifact. Not intending to solve the mystery of response in their twenty page article, Odell and Cooper offer their method as a stepping stone to the better understanding of response in the future.

As was mentioned in the introduction, one difficulty of studying reponse research or any other theoretical body of thought is identifying the point at which description becomes explanation and vice versa. Despite the blurriness of this distinction, on a continuum from explanation to description, the Bleich and Holland studies would be closest to the explanatory end; Petrosky's study would fall somewhere in the middle; and the Odell and Cooper investigation would be very close to the descriptive pole.

The methods and conclusions of the two most explanatory studies also have the widest applicability since the principles presented by Holland and Bleich can be extrapolated to all readers in all response situations. Petrosky, on the other hand, strictly limits his observations to adolescents in the cognitive stage of formal operations. The principle of personal style which he borrows from Holland is, however, universal in its usefulness. Odell and Cooper draw conclusions about their single subject only, but, of course, their method could be used to analyze any response artifact. While their classification and enumeration system is geared to the written response, the linguistic cues they employ as indicators of cognitive strategies could be identified in taped response artifacts as well.

The methods of Petrosky and Odell and Cooper are most helpful in understanding and defining the relationship between intellectual growth and response, while the methods of Holland and Bleich are not aimed at identification of cognitive developmental stages. Bleich, however, is interested in understanding changes in reader taste over time.

Structure and Theoretical Background

The Petrosky and Holland studies share a similar, flexible design which allows for either the comparison of the responses of several subjects to one text or the comparison of the responses of one subject to several texts. By virtue of the fact that Odell and Cooper had only one subject, they were restricted to the latter type of comparison. The multi-text, one-subject kind of comparison is essential to the studies of Holland, Petrosky and Odell and Cooper because all of these investigators are looking for emotional/cognitive patterns in the responses of single individuals. The point was made in the introductory chapter (above) that the question of consistency in individual response has been a crucial one for meta-readers, and it is not surprising that these researchers continue to pursue the issue. Examination of the data collected in these three investigations confirms the hypothesis that consistent individual patterns in response do in fact exist.

Bleich's focus on local context instead of reader personality or developmental stage as a primary cause of response is reflected in the comparatively loose structure of his inquiry. Unfettered by the need to pick out patterns in the repetitive responses of any given subject, Bleich freely chooses samples from his backlog of student essays which best illustrate the point he is making at any given time. As a result, Subjective Criticism is virtually a patchwork quilt of different written artifacts in the form of response and meaning statements which Bleich analyzes for associative strings or literary judgments. From these statements and what he knows about each student, Bleich distills the personal meaning which a work of literature has for an individual subject.

Of the four studies, only Petrosky's actually examines the effects of interaction between the subjects on response, although Bleich is also interested in the influence which unspoken and spoken common attitudes have on the literary interpretations of individuals. Neither Odell and Cooper nor Holland attend to this aspect of the response situation to any significant degree.

All of the investigators draw on previously established theory from various fields in setting up their studies and analyzing their data. The most prominent examples are Holland's extrapolation of Freudian theory to literary response and Odell and Cooper's analysis of their subject's essays according to the methods of the rhetoricians Young, Becker and Pike. Petrosky's adoption of Piaget's ideas and Holland/Lichtenstein's concept of identity theme or personal style also constitutes reliance on an already existing body of thought. Perhaps because of the breadth and depth of their studies, Bleich and Holland show the greatest awareness of philosophical and pyschological theory as it applies to the question of reader response, although Petrosky is not far behind them.

Method

Concerning such procedural matters as subject selection and use of psychological tests, Holland and Petrosky both employed defined criteria for the subjects they chose (e.g. age, reading ability, personality type) and both used volunteers only. Of all the meta-readers, Holland alone paid his volunteers for their time. Odell and Cooper do not make clear whether their subject volunteered for the project although he did select the texts himself. Bleich's subjects were volunteers to the extent that they had elected to take the course he taught. As the investigators who focus on the issue of cognitive growth, Odell and Cooper and Petrosky selected adolescent subjects. On the other hand, Bleich and Holland, who both sought to describe the response process in general, chose young adults.

Use of standardized psychological tests to gather background data about the subjects is another similarity between Holland's study and Petrosky's, but only Holland conferred with a psychological consultant. Since neither Bleich nor Odell and Cooper were interested in personality patterns, neither employed psychological tests.

The Holland and Petrosky studies are alike again in that both of these investigators selected the texts without any input from the subjects. The Odell and Cooper subject chose the three texts himself, while the role if any which Bleich's subjects played in text selection is not clear in all cases. The effect of the reader's involvement in text selection on his reactions to a given work is not known at this time and is a possible area for future research. The question of the effect of previous readings of a text on response is another unexamined issue. (Of course a previous reading is not necessarily a prerequisite to subject selection of a particular literary work.) Concerning the phenomenon of rereading in these four studies, many of Bleich's subjects reacted to texts they had seen previously; several of Holland's and Petrosky's respondents had already read at least a few of the texts used during these two investigations; and it is not clear whether Odell and Cooper's subject had read the three novels before he selected them.

Variations among the studies in method of data collection and the final form of the response artifact are also important although all the implications of these differences are not yet fully understood and need to be discovered through future research. As was true of their structure, the Holland and Petrosky studies are similar in data collection techniques and the final form of the response artifact. Both investigators taped interviews they held with their subjects and both subsequently had the tapes transcribed. Also, these two meta-readers structured their subjects' responses with some specific questions during the interviews, although Petrosky's discussions with his adolescents were somewhat more tightly controlled by input from the investigator than were Holland's. In contrast, Bleich and Odell and Cooper deal primarily with written response artifacts; and in both studies there was only minimal direction given by the investigator to the respondents in the form of questions or instructions.

A distinctive feature of Bleich's study is the participation of the respondents in data analysis. Through an ongoing dialogue with the investigator, these subjects came away with a greater awareness of their reactions to literature and began to understand the development of their own critical judgment. While Bleich adds his own private analyses to those of his students in _Subjective Criticism_, his subjects still have a greater level of involvement with the response after it is recorded than do any of the subjects in the other studies. The participants in the other investigations are not given the opportunity within the framework of the studies to ponder the significance of their own reactions. Petrosky's study is also unique in that he formally records and examines group interaction of the respondents. While Holland and Bleich both discuss the impact of collective thinking on individual response, Petrosky alone delves into the actual process of communication among readers.

Perhaps because he develops an original epistemological model, Bleich's study stands out among the four as containing the highest level of original terminology. As was mentioned at the beginning of chapter 5, the abundance of unusual phraseology combined with the complexity of Bleich's writing style can make reading Subjective Criticism a challenge. Petrosky's investigation contains almost no original terminology since many of the technical phrases used are borrowed from Holland or other thinkers. Although Odell and Cooper and Holland use technical terms rather heavily, the expressions employed in both studies come from the writing of other people (e.g. Freud or Lichtenstein in Holland's case, or the rhetoricians Young, Becker and Pike in the case of Odell and Cooper).

Theoretical Approaches

Of course all meta-readers examine the ideas, associations and feelings expressed by their subjects in relation to the reading experience, but there is variation among the investigators in the depth of their analyses of text, reader and response. The researchers also differ in their choice of which aspects of the complex phenomenon of response to focus upon. Variation in terms of level of reader analysis among the five reading analysts examined here is wide, ranging from Holland who conjectures about the very core of his readers' subconscious minds, to Odell and Cooper who make little comment at all about their subject as a person. Bleich analyzes the expressed responses of his readers in great detail, but makes few statements about his subjects which deal with matters that are not readily observable or easily inferred. Petrosky, who falls somewhere between Bleich and Holland, stops short of identifying unconscious fantasies but does make summary statements about his subjects' personalities and the psychological themes that surface in their responses to the texts and standardized tests.

In terms of emphasis on the structure of the response artifacts, Petrosky, Odell and Cooper and Bleich all discuss the grammatical and/or thematic sequence of their subjects' responses. Petrosky notes, for example, that his subjects' group discussions about the texts flow from concrete issues to more abstract ideas, while Odell and Cooper make similar observations about the patterns of intellectual strategies composing their subject's essays. Bleich too notes the relationship of ideas in his subjects' responses when he analyzes the response statements for associative strings. Less concern with grammatical and thematic sequence or structural pattern is evident in Holland's analyses. He pays considerably more attention, however, to the semantic value of individual words and phrases his subjects used as indicators of their feelings and preoccupations than do either Odell and Cooper or Petrosky.

Bleich, Holland and Petrosky all quote their subjects profusely in their analyses and use the subjects' own words wherever possible. This characteristic is common to all three studies because Holland, Bleich and Petrosky (as a student of Holland) share an awareness of language as a public and private entity which carries a common meaning and an individual one. Both Bleich and Holland make a concerted effort to understand the unique meaning of a particular subject's language by viewing the subject's words in a personal context of associations or psychological areas of concern. Because of the highly specific goal of the Odell and Cooper study to identify cognitive strategies, these investigators view their subject's language strictly as cues through which to recognize the various intellectual manipulations he uses.

It has been noted more than once in this presentation that explanations which these meta-readers offer for misreading of a text by a subject are indicative of the different ways they approach the response phenomenon. As a proponent of the holistic approach, for example, Holland takes the position that the finite thoughts and actions of an individual can be explained by relating them to the individual's larger personality and behavior patterns. Consistent with this concept, inaccurate perceptions or memories of what was read are not random occurrences but clues to the reader's psychological needs, desires and fantasies. Petrosky's focus on intellectual growth is evident in his isolation of cognitive capability as the main determinant of what a reader will understand or misunderstand.

Bleich attributes the misreading by one respondent of Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" to yet another factor--the communal myth about the poet/the poem. While Bleich sees personal predisposition as a major factor in reader perception, his explanation for this particular example of a stretched interpretation of Frost's poem includes the recognition that communal thought is a given part of the individual perspective from which a reader views a literary work. In their article Odell and Cooper do not elucidate any mistakes which their subject may have made, although their system of identifying intellectual strategies could certainly prove valuable in understanding the cognitive maneuvers occurring while an individual is reporting an inaccuracy in his perceptions of a text. Perhaps understanding of these strategies could also lead to discovery of the kinds of thinking which are most difficult for a particular reader and which prevent him from reading a text accurately.

In their respective analyses Bleich, Petrosky and Holland all focus on the thematic content of the responses. Although each of these meta-readers interprets the significance of the themes differently, they all share an interest in the topical preoccupations (e.g. isolation or power) which run through their subjects' commentaries. Odell and Cooper, on the other hand, are concerned with the mental operations the subject uses to frame his statements about the text rather than with what the subject is saying.

While they do look for cognitive patterns, Odell and Cooper stand out among these researchers because they do not focus on the substantive/thematic patterns of the response. All of the four studies without exception, however, contain some reference to the subject's general liking or disliking of the text(s).

As was mentioned before, typically the attention to broad positive or negative feelings seems to replace the recording and analysis of more subtle emotions evoked by a reading (e.g. fear or jealousy). From Bleich's viewpoint, however, the meta-reader who overlooks a subject's specific feelings is ignoring the response itself and is actually examining only the literary judgments or acts of taste which result from the unnoticed response.

One major indicator of the range of variation represented by these studies is the different manner in which each meta-reader approaches the text. Holland's approach is the most complex since he speaks repeatedly about the subjective nature of the text and yet by his own admission he unavoidably guages the reactions of his readers against the rather constant underlying fantasy which he as a reader ascribes to "A Rose For Emily." Bleich sidesteps this source of contradiction inherent in 5 Readers Reading by commenting and conjecturing much less about the hidden meanings of the texts which his readers experienced and focusing almost exclusively on what they have written about what they read. Since Bleich refrains from interpreting the text, he avoids creating any inconsistency between his philosophical position about the subjective, variable nature of the text from reader to reader, and the analytical work he does with the response and meaning statements. A more philosophically significant difference between Holland and Bleich in terms of the nature of the text is evidenced by the latter's refutation of the limitation placed by Holland on the number of mental images which a reader can associate with a text without misreading. Through his objections to Holland's position (recorded on p. 125) and his identification of the text as a symbolic object, Bleich establishes himself as the most extreme proponent among these meta-readers of the text as a variable quantity subject to individually and communally authorized interpretation.

Like Holland, Petrosky tempers his basically subjective view of the text with the qualification that a finite number of interpretations can be correctly ascribed to a given literary work. In the study itself Petrosky treats the texts as fairly constant entities against which individuality in the responses of different readers can be guaged. His selection of one of the texts on the basis that it contains a particular cognitive challenge for the readers suggests that he ascribes at least some constant characteristics to a literary work which will be experienced by all those reading it. Philosophical consideration of the nature of the text falls outside the scope of the Odell and Cooper study which focuses exclusively on the response artifact. As is consistent with the overall intents of their studies, Bleich and Holland treat the texts they selected primarily as affective stimuli for their subjects while Petrosky sees the literary works his subjects read as both psychological stimuli and cognitive challenges.

Of the meta-readers covered here, Holland is the most vocal about his awareness of his own personality as a factor in data analysis. Indeed, his forthright acknowledgment of his personal point of view in his examination of both the text and his subjects is a distinctive feature of 5 Readers Reading. None of the other investigators verbalize a similar sensitivity to their own unique predispositions. Not as well developed is Holland's view of his presence in the interview situation as an influencing factor in the reader's response, although at least twice he does note a possible inhibiting or instigating effect which his presence may have had on a subject (p. 58, above). Bleich's emphasis on himself and his relationships with the subjects as factors in response is much stronger than Holland's and is a benchmark of his approach. Petrosky makes observations about his relationships with his subjects but speaks little of the possible effect of his own personal presence on the data. Since Odell and Cooper had no formal personal contact with their subject, they do not consider this aspect of the meta-reading situation.

Conclusions

Although the findings of these four studies are not typically articulated by the investigators as formal conclusions, the factors identified in each investigation as causes of response are clearly inferable from the observations made by the researchers as well as from the methodologies they employ. It is clear, for example, that Holland and to a lesser degree Petrosky consider reader personality or identity theme to be a major determinant of reader response. Both of these meta-readers combine impressionistic techniques and standardized testing to establish personality profiles for their subjects. The profiles then enable these investigators to understand the reactions of each reader in light of the broader framework of that subject's general behavior and thought patterns.

Bleich overtly rejects this holistic approach and instead looks toward the immediate circumstances surrounding the subject at the time of response as well as current and past life situations and significant relationships to explain response. According to the author of Subjective Criticism it is not possible in a non-therapeutic situation for an investigator to gain adequate familiarity with a reader to make broad generalizations about the individual's personality. Although Petrosky works primarily with identity themes and cognitive styles, he also occasionally takes the subject's current life situations into account when analyzing response. Odell and Cooper are not concerned with explaining response through either identity themes or circumstances in the subject's life.

Of the meta-readers examined here, Bleich makes the most use of the subjects' associations and memories of experiences and people to understand response, or the immediate gut-level "motivational initiative" behind literary judgment. Holland makes less use of the subjects' past experiences and Petrosky makes almost none. Again, Odell and Cooper do not attempt to relate historical information about the subject to his responses.

To varying degrees all the meta-readers discussed in this presentation show awareness of emotional stages of development in their analyses of their data. Although Odell and Cooper give little attention to feeling in their actual analysis, in their introductory remarks they clearly state that their intellectual strategy scheme can be used to describe response statements with emotional content. The descriptive method these two meta-readers propose could also lead, therefore, to greater understanding of the interaction of intellectual and emotional growth as it relates to response. Despite their emphasis on the intellectual, the Odell and Cooper method includes a tangential relevance to emotional aspects of response as well. At one point in Subjective Criticism Bleich uses Erikson's scale of age specific preoccupation in the analysis of a respondent's essay, but he qualifies that use with the statement that information about age specific characteristics is more valuable in elucidating the responses of children than the reactions of adults.

As a Freudian, Holland relies heavily on the concept of stage-related developmental characteristics to explain his subjects' reactions. While all his subjects are adults, Holland associates the themes and fantasies he finds in their responses with the earlier developmental stages which theoretically determine the final form of an individual's personality and which remain vestigially evident in the emotional make-up of the mature person. (The identification of an oral or phallic fantasy, for example, is a reference to a stage of development.) Although, like Holland, Petrosky is interested in identifying long-standing thematic concerns of his subjects, because his readers are adolescents he also works with the distinct emotional characteristics of teenagers as defined by Anna Freud. Petrosky more than any of the other investigators discussed in this presentation uses emotional characteristics associated with a specific developmental stage to analyze the responses of individuals in that stage at the time of the study.

Considering the different basic intents of these studies, it is to be expected that Petrosky and Odell and Cooper look to a reader's cognitive or intellectual stage of development as a causative factor in reponse while Holland and Bleich make no direct application of cognitive stage theory to the responses of any of their subjects. (Both Holland and Bleich do, however, discuss the development of individual human perception on a philosophical level.) As was mentioned earlier, Odell and Cooper cite the potential value of their system in defining the patterns of discrete intellectual strategies which characterize any particular developmental stage. Such detailed description may enable future researchers to trace subtle changes in a reader's perceptual and expressive capabilities over time. The major thrust of the Petrosky study is, of course, to explain reader perception through Piaget's developmental hierarchy of cognitive functions or "operations".

More than the other investigators, Bleich considers the circumstances surrounding the subject both during the actual reading and at the time of response to be primary causes of the response. While Holland and Petrosky report the physical, social and psychological settings in which the responses were given, neither of them invests these variables with the explanatory value conferred on them by the author of Subjective Criticism. Inquiry into the role of these factors in determining response is not included in the Odell and Cooper study as it was designed in 1977 although such inquiry could be facilitated in the future through employment of their descriptive methods.

The influence of group interaction and reading ability on response is given the most consideration by Petrosky. Although he relegates reading ability to a position of secondary importance among the five variables of response which he isolates, he still identifies it as a distinct factor and makes reference to the scores his subjects earned on standardized reading tests. Petrosky is the only investigator covered here who investigates group interaction among subjects as a cause of response. (Bleich, however, devotes one chapter to discussion of commonly held attitudes and collective myths as causative factors in the responses of individual readers.) Reading ability is not dealt with to any significant degree by Odell and Cooper, Bleich or Holland.

Contributions of Each Investigator

Perhaps Holland's most significant contribution to response research in general and the art of meta-reading in particular lies in his successful application of a consistent, self-contained and highly recognized explanatory theory to the data which he collected from his subjects. Rather than theorizing in the abstract about the response process as did Lesser, or gathering largely unexplicated pages of statistical data about reader reaction as did so many of his predecessors, Holland analyzes data he collected from his own subjects by placing those data in the conceptual framework which Freud constructed to elucidate personality development and function. Further, Holland proposes a working paradigm for the phenomenon of response, thereby attempting to identify and interrelate the many functions which constitute the subjective literary experience. Beyond illustrating the universal "hows and whys" of reader reaction, Holland also identifies the idiosyncratic reaction patterns of five distinctly unique college students and strives to define individuality in response. Holland's attempt to go beyond description in his study and actually explain response in itself represents a great step forward.

Through the abandonment of the objective experimental model upon which so much earlier research in this area is based and the adoption of the more intuitive principles of psychoanalysis, Holland developed data collection and evaluation techniques more suited to the subjective phenomenon under examination. Only by freeing himself from the necessity to compile frequencies of statement types or enumerate other objective criteria could he begin to penetrate the heart of the response process and investigate the central core of subjectivity. Instead of encumbering himself with scientific or pseudoscientific constraint, Holland draws upon the thinking of established psychologists, linguists and philosophers to build a firm foundation of recognized humanistic scholarship for his study. In concrete terms this freedom from the semblance of objectivity enabled Holland to use the interview/free association technique and to approach the analysis of his data holistically. Further, he conjectures about his subjects' unconscious minds thereby achieving a deeper although more hypothetical level of analysis than typifies most response studies done before his which were designed to yield verifiable "proof".

By getting away from numbers and statistical calculations, Holland is also able to shift his attention to the thematic significance of his subjects' language and contemplate the private, connotative meaning of the words comprising the expressed response to the specific individuals reporting that response. Also, despite any shortcomings of his controversial study, Holland successfully departs from traditional experimental assumptions about objectivity and views himself, the investigator, as one factor in the subjective equation through the acknowledgment of his own personal emotions and predispositions as givens in the investigative situation.

Using many of Holland's techniques, approaches and basic insights, Petrosky examines the role of cognitive development in reader response as well as the presence of thematic patterns in the reactions of individuals. Like Holland, Petrosky also extrapolates the theories of a renowned thinker, in this case Piaget, to the challenge of understanding reader reaction. Through his study he has advanced response research with insight into the effects of perceptual levels on the responses of adolescent readers to fiction. In addition, he pinpoints five general variables which hypothetically determine response. Also of significance is his inquiry into the effects of group interaction among readers on the perceptions of individual subjects. This line of inquiry remains largely unexplored and warrants future attention. A distinctive feature of Petrosky's study which may make it a prototype for other investigations is its simultaneous examination of both cognitive and emotional variables from the point of view that these two aspects of the functioning human being are inseparable and work together to form response. In addition, Petrosky's tabular presentation of subjective, impressionistic data may be a form of organization which future researchers will want to emulate.

As Odell and Cooper state in their introductory remarks, their study was designed to demonstrate a method for identifying the intellectual strategies executed by a reader as he records his responses. This method constitutes their addition to the body of response research and will allow future investigators to describe the response artifact in unprecedented detail. The Odell and Cooper method has the potential to play a significant role in the search for greater definition of perceptual growth in readers and may also prove useful in establishing the limits of the cognitive range of an individual reader at a given time. These meta-readers also demonstrate through their article that statistical analysis can be applied to the responses of single subjects as well as to the reactions of large groups of readers.

Through development and presentation of the theoretical approach he calls subjective criticism, David Bleich has made several important contributions to response research. First, he introduced the concept that expressed response is the linguistic "resymbolization" of an instantaneous gut-level literary response or "motivational initiative" which, while not subconscious, is usually ignored by the average reader. Second, he postulates that through some minimal training a reader can learn to capture and record these feelings by writing a "response statement". Third, and most importantly, according to Bleich only through joint analysis of the response data by both the reader and the investigator in a "negotiative relationship" will "authorized knowledge" be developed about the personal significance of a text for the reader, and will the steps which the reader took to form a literary judgment be retraced.

Beyond expressing the idea that the subject must cooperate in meaningful data analysis, Bleich also redefines the nature of the text and the expressed response by proposing an original epistemological system. Further, he challenges traditional dependence on personality and/or cognitive patterns as explanations for response, and suggests that the immediate circumstances surrounding the reader both at the time of the reading and when the response is reported are more significant determinants of reaction than commonly thought. Equally important to these concepts are both the emphasis Bleich places on the feelings behind the expressed response and his method for identifying the origins of those feelings in the personal history of each reader. Bleich's insight into the relationship between communal attitudes and individual response represents another addition to response research. Whether the provocative positions Bleich presents in Subjective Criticism are eventually rejected, adopted or continuously debated by the meta-reading community, his study will remain a formidable work which has a permanent place alongside other major meta-reading efforts.

State of the Art in the Late 1970s

Viewed as indicators of the nature of response research during the late 1970s, these studies suggest that many valid approaches have been taken to solving the mystery of reader subjectivity, but a definitive, widely accepted explanation for the phenomenon has yet to be discovered. Review of the four meta-reading studies discussed here reveals that researchers have looked for answers to the questions raised by reader individuality by examining such variables as stable personality characteristics, age-associated emotional preoccupations and cognitive ability, past experiences, memories and associations, past and present relationships, and local contexts surrounding the reader at the times of reading and recording of the expressed response. Further, the disagreement among meta-readers (notably Holland and Bleich) over the validity of the various approaches and philosophical positions presented here indicates that wide theoretical differences on such basic issues as the relative importance of local context in determining response or the subjective or objective nature of the text prevent the establishment of a universally approved methodology for investigating response. While it is evident from examination of these four investigations that studies of response are generally more descriptive than explanatory, it is also true that great strides have been made toward identification of the factors involved in the reading process as well as toward understanding of the working relationships of these factors. Through paradigmatic theories like those of Bleich and Holland, investigators are also pinning down the sequence of events or patterns of activity that constitute response and are recognizing general principles of reaction in addition to the individual idiosyncracies of each reader.

Although inroads have been made toward understanding both the cognitive and affective components of response, the emotional aspect of reader reaction remains the less explored aspect and has proven the more difficult to study. One major impediment to progress in this area is the fuzzy distinction between thought and feeling which results in substitution of discussion about the thoughts accompanying response for analysis of feelings themselves. Underlying this obstacle is the broader theoretical question posed by Freud and others about the virtual impossibility of communicating feeling without thought in a linguistic setting. Yet, while thought and feeling are very closely intertwined, as Petrosky and Piaget have pointed out, these two aspects of human experience are not reducible to each other. Further, if awareness of the difference between intellect and feeling is not maintained, the words and ideas comprising response can be mistaken for feeling and the momentarily transient emotions lost forever. Therefore, David Bleich's method of collecting two separate kinds of statements from his subjects (one dealing with immediate feeling and association and the other with ideas about the text) represents a major advance toward unraveling the tangle of functions that constitute response because it minimizes the danger of confounding thought and feeling.

Through his techniques and approaches Bleich has also set a precedent for a degree of subject participation in data analysis beyond that which was customary in earlier studies. By including his readers in the data analysis process, he has proven the value to the investigator of the insights which a fully-informed subject may have into himself and his own reactions. As a result, now more than ever before there is an awareness that it is the subject himself who controls access to the conscious aspects of his response, and he must be highly motivated to reveal and understand his emotional reactions to literature.

Although the case study has now been firmly established as the research design most suited to the detailed examination of the reactions of individual readers, the work of Odell and Cooper demonstrates that the kind of numerical compilation which characterized large sample investigations is still an appropriate technique adaptable to a case study setting. The investigations carried out by the five meta-readers discussed in this presentation also suggest that response researchers are close to achieving an optimum balance between theory and data compilation. Meta-readers are also more cognizant than ever before of the limited usefulness of random observations unaccompanied by explanatory concepts.

In terms of methods of data analysis, while the holistic approach stemming from the highly recognized psychoanalytic tradition is still an important tool, an alternate approach has been introduced by Bleich which focuses on current circumstance more than on long-standing personality characteristics as a source of explanation for response. Whether or not this shift in emphasis signals a major change in the direction of response research, it still represents an additional avenue which investigators can take to the explanation of reaction to literature.

The conclusions reached by these researchers about the reading process also shed light on many heretofore unexplained or unexamined aspects of the behavior of patrons and librarians relative to library materials. While it is not being suggested here that the librarian routinely subject patrons to the kind of analytical techniques used by these researchers, awareness of these studies can certainly broaden the professional's appreciation of the uniqueness of the reading experience for each individual. Such appreciation can directly influence the kinds of decisions the librarian makes while he or she is developing the library collection or advising patrons about their personal selection of materials. At the very least, the insights about the individuality and complexity of reader taste offered by these studies reinforce the basic concept of the importance of a non-judgmental approach by the librarian to the choices of reading materials made by patrons. These insights can also enlighten the librarian about his own responses to texts and can enable the professional to see himself or herself as a reader, responding subjectively and personally as well as professionally.

In addition, the ideas expressed by these investigators of response can give the librarian a better theoretical grasp of the mechanisms behind both the casual reaction to texts which is encountered on a day to day basis as well as the more extreme, but not uncommon manifestation of group response known as censorship. Through exposure to the work done by response researchers, the librarian can also become aware of the many levels on which analysis of reading can be done, from the most superficial descriptive quantifications to the most lofty philosophical hypothesizing about the unconscious mind. Further, knowledge of the nature of these studies can certainly increase the professional's sensitivity to the extremely delicate and multi-layered nature of the reading process itself.

Finally, these studies demonstrate the value of an inter-disciplinary approach to research questions which are relevant to the field of librarianship. There is no need for reading research or library research to be done in isolation, uninformed by the tremendous advances made by psychologists, philosophers, and educators. The four investigations described here graphically exemplify the kind of use which can be made of the well established theoretical base of the social sciences and humanities in giving meaning to a wide variety of data. It is desirable for those who seek answers to questions about libraries, their contents and the people who use them to join these meta-readers in looking to the work already done in other fields for aid in fathoming the mysteries of human behavior and esthetic response.

Directions for Future Research

From the work done by Holland, Petrosky, Odell and Cooper and Bleich, it appears that in the years to come meta-readers will be delving more deeply into several fundamental issues which have already been identified in this presentation. Basic hypotheses about emotional and intellectual consistency in individual reader reaction across several texts and over periods of time certainly need further testing along with examination of all the variables which could influence such consistency. Also, long term studies of specific subjects spanning many years are needed to define what psychological and cognitive growth in individuals really means relative to their reading. Another broad challenge facing researchers is clarification of the different roles played by stable individual characteristics and immediate circumstances in determining reader reactions. Perhaps the effort to sort out the effects of stable individual characteristics and changing situations would be advanced by the selection of subjects who have undergone psychoanalysis and therefore have a higher level of self-awareness. In addition, understanding of the etiology of the specific feelings experienced by an individual during reading could be advanced through the selection of subjects who have become accustomed to focusing on their own emotions in a therapeutic setting and who have experienced a subjective negotiative relationship. Certainly much more attention needs to be given to the seminal question of why a particular reader experiences a particular feeling at a particular moment in his reading. Exploration of this issue may also lead to the discovery of the relationships between the emotional substratum of response, the reader's eventual judgments about what he has read and his literary "tastes".

Establishment of effective study designs through which meta-readers can successfully examine the broad areas just mentioned demands further exploration of some of the technical and methodological questions raised in this presentation. How, for example, does subject participation in text selection and data analysis influence the outcome of a study and what effect does rereading of a particular text have on a reader's responses? Further, how does the final form of the response artifact as a tape or a transcript alter what can be discovered about reader reaction? In addition to dealing with these matters, researchers will also have to consider whether it is fruitful and appropriate for them to attempt to describe the role of the subconscious mind in response. If such a challenge is undertaken more choices need to be made about techniques which will be employed to gain access to this elusive core of personality. Regardless of the level of subject analysis, however, meta-readers who adopt the personal interview as one of their data collection methods must maintain both sensitivity to all the aspects of the interview situation and a high awareness of the interviewer's presence and personality as factors in response. Of course all meta-readers using either the taped personal interview or written essay forms of data collection should be able to make informed decisions about such variables of the interview situation as the degree to which the investigator structures the expressed response with questions or allows the subject to free associate.

The question about the effects of group interaction on the perceptions of readers represents more wide-open territory for exploration. The meta-reader following this line of inquiry will be faced with decisions about balancing his investigation between case study and group observation. He will also need to remain sensitive to such technical considerations as the influence of the presence of the investigator on response and the effect of the form of the response artifact on the outcome of the study.

As was mentioned in the introduction (p. 20, above), future meta-readers may also want to pursue the "breakage technique" originated by Squire which entails the interruption of a reader at previously designated points in the text to facilitate the recording of the response as it is synthesized. Employment of this approach may yield insight into general and individual sequential patterns of emotional involvement with a text. There is additional room for study in the area of the influence of reader expectation on response. How much does a reader's picture of what the reading experience should be determine his perceptions of the text; and how much do his preconceptions of what the investigator might ask him about a literary work shape the expressed response? Through the collection of reader attitudes prior to reading, researchers may be able to pinpoint the correspondence between what a subject is looking for when he reads and what he eventually finds in the literature he experiences.

Undoubtedly one of the most tantalizing mysteries of the reading process is the phenomenon of total absorption. Psychologists, critics, estheticians and reading researchers are still far from understanding how an individual becomes so involved in a text that he feels transported to another realm of experience as if he had become one with the fictional events represented by the author's words. Modern thinkers like Bleich, Holland and Lesser have built the philosophical foundations upon which a definitive explanation for this phenomenon may one day rest, but today theorists are still in the company of their predecessors from Aristotle to Coleridge who also had only partial answers to their questions about the nature of vicarious experience.

Because of the multi-faceted nature of the reading process all of the very different approaches to investigating response developed by the meta-readers discussed here are worthwhile and will need to be supplemented with yet more advanced techniques and theories before researchers can meet the challenge of explaining what happens in our heads and hearts when we experience literature. Since reading is only one aspect of the totality of human behavior, it is unlikely that advances made by meta-readers toward understanding response will exceed those made by psychologists, neurologists and psychiatrists in their sophisticated and highly specialized quest for definition of man's general intellectual and emotional processes. It must be remembered that the abstract mental activities of response are supported by physical functions; therefore the work done by researchers who study the brain along with the mind will undoubtedly shed light on the hidden dimensions of reading.

While progress has been made in recording and analyzing response, the final explanation for this phenomenon lies in the yet-to-be-discovered nexus between the thought and the synapse, the feeling and the subtle physical changes which accompany it. Insight into response goes hand in hand with insight into how people assimilate new experience and how they then remember it. Significant answers to the questions surrounding reader reaction will also bring us closer to defining our essential nature as human beings--as creatures who have the unique gift of synthesizing feelings, thoughts and images of inestimable personal value from black marks on a page.

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Appendix 1

Table for Kathy

Style

Is curious and understanding.

Values thinking as an end in itself.

Relates meaning to past experience and imagination.

Attends to detail and description in literature.

Enjoys dreams and reverie--no nightmares--likes to investigate meaning of dreams.

Prefers dream-like images in poetry.

Analytically ciphers text for "evidence."

Uses sophisticated hypothetico-deductive logic.

Shows concern for the future--devises life plans.

Likes to figure out meaning for herself when reading a literary selection.

Personal Themes

Fills gaps with fantasy and reverie.

Expresses the need to share--to give--thoughts and feelings.

Honesty in personal relationships entails showing one's feelings.

Communication and knowing each other are also pertinent to personal relationships.

People should be able to find a place to "fit-in"--people should be helped to feel wanted.

From the TAT's: (1) the theme of that-which-is-unknown-underneath is many faceted (ascertaining the underlying meaning in prose; expressing feelings and thoughts; and discovering a "whole new world" under the surface of both the self and others); (2) daydreams, dreams, memories, and fantasy are all a part of the world underneath; and (3) one has to struggle, not necessarily alone, for a good future.

Pleasurable experiences heighten everyday happenings.

One must give of one's self in order to find and maintain a place where one can "fit-in."

Source: Anthony R. Petrosky, "Individual and Group Responses of Fourteen and Fifteen Year Olds to Short Stories, Novels, Poems, and Thematic Apperception Tests: Case Studies Based on Piagetian Genetic Epistemology and Freudian Psychoanalytic Ego Psychology" (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1975), p. 162.

Appendix 2

Influence of Relationships on Response

On entering the course, Mr. P suspected that he might need my help in making the transition from college to professional life, and this help was not only in the form of a high grade. It was more significantly sought as a confirmation of the success achieved until that point and as an encouragement for the future. But Mr. P felt he could not come to me, a total stranger, and announce that he needed help because, I think, he felt it would be unmanly to do so. But he could follow my instructions and be like me as much as possible, express his feelings carefully in the "assignment," and thus demonstrate his positive attitude toward our relationship. Just as he shrewdly appeals to his father's self-esteem through imitation and emulation to gain his love and attention, he similarly appealed to me for my professional endorsement. His satisfaction was very great when I cited his essay in class as an excellent example of how to relate one's feelings. Mr. P was able to demonstrate his need for "love" without announcing it explicitly or risking embarrassment through disclosure of his presumed dependency or vulnerability.

Sometimes, I thought I could see that Mr. P was deliberately controlling hostile feelings toward me, not out of compulsion but from a conviction of their inappropriateness, as when I expressed my annoyance at being asked to permit more work for a higher grade. I think the essay also contains a subdued strain of hostility and aggression, but the control of it appears to be much less conscious. Mr. P reports that his behavior could embarrass his father, and this would incur painful punishments, either corporal or psychological. On three occasions in the essay, however, the language suggests a more violent dimension in his feelings for his father. In paragraph 1, he says that he remembers nothing specific that "triggered" his feelings of love. The sentence semantically denies the "triggering" effect, but it metaphorically compares the love feelings to the suddenness of a gunshot. In paragraphs 2 and 4 he describes the change of his perception of his father and his father's new "power" over him as happening suddenly. In paragraph 5, he says, "I still don't think that I have ever told my father, point blank, that I love him." Here, the phrase "point blank" a less ordinary metaphor than "trigger," compares telling his love to shooting, though this time it is Mr. P who is the active party rather than the passive one who was caught by the love earlier. In paragraph 4, Mr. P describes the process of emulation and how he learned to win his father to his point of view with "sad, quiet looks." He characterizes this emulative technique of persuasion as "I got him with his own weapon." Finally, in the last paragraph, Mr. P reports that if he told his father that he wanted to be just like him, the father "would tell me to aim higher." Such fusillary imagery describes expectable feelings in relationships between fathers and sons, but in this case it seems related--even verbally, as in the "point blank" sentence--to his inhibition about telling his love. Furthermore, a father's telling a son to "aim higher" could be a gesture of love and admiration by the father, or an instruction not to "shoot at" him, or a gesture of self-effacement, or a rejection of the son's excessive admiration, or all or some of these at the same time. I think that for Mr. P in this essay, the first meaning is the main one, while the others are feared or suspected.

Mr. P does not explore the other possibilities on the conscious grounds that he need not confront his father with his feelings because, anyway, Father "must know." He says that he tried to "tell" his father through emulation, but even today, he is still wondering if this is enough. Mr. P describes a relationship in which one of his motives was to tell without articulating directly. I think this was also the classroom motivation in turning in this essay--to tell me his needs, without articulating them directly, by fully cooperating with the class's work. This is one reason I began to think that the essay could represent more "imitation" than is obvious. In the last paragraph, Mr. P says: "It is foolish to think that the words on this piece of paper could in any way approximate my feelings for my father. However, writing them down makes me look at them with a different perspective." I am thinking that they may not approximate his feelings because they are not all his words, but I also believe that regardless of whose words they are, they reliably express Mr. P's classroom motives as well as, probably, a degree of frustration in his relationship with his father. The pedagogically important matter - just in this essay--is my perception of the connection between the words and Mr. P's motivational situation in class.

My perception is this: Mr. P has some aggressive feelings--he would like to be able to just snatch away his A, graduate, and go on to his good new job. At the same time, he wants to earn this achievement; to do it right; to write honestly, learn from the experience, and emulate what he thinks is my ability and authority; and he wants the grade to represent this authentic experience. But the first essay expresses his problem as his impulse to suppress his true feelings and imitate rather than announce the feelings and emulate. His solution to the problem--in the essay, again--is the announcement, with a certain degree of aplomb and diplomacy, that the authoritative figure "must know." As the course proceeded, it became clear to Mr. P that I, at least, did not "know," that his fears had to be announced, and that my initiative had to be enlisted.

Other essays in this course, whose authorship I never doubted, contributed to this perception of Mr. P, and further show the kind of knowledge both of us were able to develop from our relationship. Just after Mr. P told me of his problem, he wrote an essay on the most important line in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." The line he wrote about was "It is impossible to say just what I mean!" His final comment on the line and on the hero of the poem is this:

> Then again he is forced to face the sting of reality. That reality is having so much inside to say but finding it impossible to say what he means. That one line ties the whole poem together for me. He knows what he wants to say and yet he rationalizes that he doesn't. He knows who he wants to address but doesn't because he rationalizes that they will misunderstand what he is trying to say. I suppose each of us has been in this situation at least once in our lives. I cannot imagine how frustrating it would be to feel that way every day of my life. I think I too would want to scream, "It is impossible to say just what I mean!"

In the traditional pedagogical situation, this paragraph would represent an interpretation that others in the class could test for truth. The issue would be whether the poem is "about" a man who does not know how to say what he means. But viewing the paragraph also as a subjective expression gives us a sense of its authority. I think that one important experience which authorized this judgment of the poem was the conversation with me in which Mr. P felt as he now sees Prufrock feeling: he felt misunderstood, especially when I implied, through my somewhat impatient tones, that it was not ethical to request special treatment just to secure an A. What he "meant" was that he only wanted to finish this course and achieve excellence in an honest way. I think he felt it "impossible" to express his fear of the consequences if this did not happen. In Mr. P's first essay, he rationalized not telling his father because "he must know." In this essay, he sees the exclamation of inarticulability as itself a rationalization, and he expresses relief that he does not feel this way very often. Therefore, the motive for the knowledge about the poem in this paragraph is similar to the motive for the first essay, but now there is an additional classroom experience that has made the first motive more immediate and given it a new form: there was a personal frustration in negotiating his relationship with me pursuant to his larger motivation in the course. His emotional inhibition and the inhibition of his language system are identical. Yet, when his attention is on the poem, he is able to articulate a statement that exactly expresses his own feelings about himself at the time of writing. By assimilating the reading experience to his own language system, he is able to reduce his frustration through articulation of his knowledge of "the poem."

Source: David Bleich, Subjective Criticism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 141-44.

Appendix 3

Collective Thought and Professional Critics

The study of response statements aims to disclose collective motives for defining literary regularities. In the discussion to follow, I will suggest what I think are some consequences of conceiving Jonathan Swift as a characteristic mind of the eighteenth century--that is, a writer thought to confirm the title "age of order" - and then I will propose how a response statement to his poem "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed" confirms instead doubts about such generalization. The knowledge derivable from the response will then concern our own collective interest in Swift and in the eighteenth century; and it will also suggest a collective basis for admitting alternative definitions of literary regularity in that period.

The traditional concept of eighteenth-century culture emphasizes the rise of the middle class, a concern with everyday life, the ideal of reason (meaning common sense), and increasing faith in common sense as the essence of human rationality. The harmony in nature, especially in the motion of celestial bodies as described by Newton, was understood as a divine manifestation of common sense. There was a social and natural order that was regular in all its details; there was an increased concern with landscaping, architecture, and furniture; music was balanced, contrapuntal, and regular in its rhythms. Historically in England, order meant social stabilization after the Restoration, a new emphasis on the ancient "classical" authors, and political propriety and regularity. Order seemed to describe the literary habits of the heroic couplet; the serialized, epistolary, and episodic novel; and comedies of the well-mannered. The growth of the middle class seemed to "order" the historical conflict between aristocracy and peasantry. This modern picture of eighteenth-century life carries truth value in ways similar to the image of Frost developed by the twenty-one respondents: the picture is not mendacious--it just stresses certain features over others.

Bonamy Dobree's discussion of Swift in the Oxford History of English Literature shows the critical effects of the traditional view of that age:

> The scatological had been an element in Swift's work ever since "The Problem" of 1699. . . . The decay, the collapse of the body, how appalling! his own vertigo, how humiliating! how nauseating the whole business of physical being! Yet if this is the human body, the condition of existence, very well, then, he will accept it (it is one of the hells beneath), he will face it, defeat it by outfacing it. What is abnormal about this attitude is not its rarity, but its intensity; the intensity itself is the abnormality, as it is in much that Swift wrote . . .
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> [Dobree continues] The subject can be dropped in discussing Swift's contribution to literature (though not in discussing Swift himself); but there is just one comment to be made with respect to one of the malodorous poems of the period--"A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed." . . . Swift was not the only person at this time to write that sort of poem: we get it in Prior, Parnell, and others. . . . Like a good deal of verse and prose printed during this period, it is what we might term schoolboy rather than anything else. The age, of course, was less squeamish than ours--it had to be or die of aromatic pain, not of a rose. . . . Having said that, we can return to a consideration of Swift's more central contributions to literature.[5]

In the first paragraph, Dobree treats Swift's scatological concerns as having an "abnormal" intensity. Were they abnormal relative to Swift, to his time, or to our time? If Swift's intensity "itself is the abnormality," is his other work also atypical in that regard? Dr. Johnson was also intense; is he typical or atypical? If the age was "less squeamish than ours," as Dobree allows in his second paragraph, wouldn't normality and abnormality then have features different from those now? If other important figures of the age also wrote "malodorous" poetry, why should the subject be "dropped"? Did schoolboys actually write such verse, and should we ignore the fact that Swift wrote "A Beautiful Young Nymph" when he was over sixty? Each of my questions implies contradictory thinking in Dobree's comments. But there are no contradictions if those comments are understood as a manifestation of a distinct set of values, and his judgments as serving the society which holds those values. Dobree and those who share his perspective reject the scatological material to the extent of diminishing its importance to almost nothing. The extremely "disorderly" nature of this material does not seem to be consistent with the picture of the age of order. If Dobree's remarks are taken as representative of a collective exercise of taste, they are more pedagogically negotiable than if they are understood as judgments of historical fact, as the title of the volume in which they appear suggests.

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[5] Bonamy Dobree, English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century (Oxford, 1959), pp. 462-63.

Norman O. Brown's opinion of the excremental theme in Swift is considerably different from Dobree's: "Whereas for Rabelais and Aristophanes the anal function is part of the total human being which they make us love because it is a part of life, for Swift it becomes the decisive weapon in his assault on the pretensions, the pride, even the self-respect of mankind. . . . The understanding of Swift . . . begins with the recognition that Swift's anatomy of human nature, in its entirety and at the most profound and profoundly disturbing level, can be called 'The Excremental Vision.'"[6] Brown understands Swift's scatological concerns as a definitive feature of his work. Furthermore, Brown interprets the "excremental vision" as part of a complex of Western values and not necessarily a hallmark of the eighteenth century. This complex is the "universal neurosis" of mankind which pervades history.[7] Therefore, both in his local view of Swift and his general view of history, Brown's system of intellectual categories derives from values which contradict Dobree's. Even so, the system is no less local or peculiar to the contemporary perspective. The differences with Dobree only emphasize their analogous anchorage in widely held intellectual formulas and their attempts to have their own values define an objective reality. Even though Brown's remarks seem more fully governed by an attitude of argumentation, he assumes, like Dobree, that there is an ultimate essence of Swift's thought and work that the best form of reasoning will reveal.

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[6] Norman O. Brown, "The Excremental Vision," in Life Against Death (New York, 1959), p. 179.

[7] Ibid., p. 185.

Source: David Bleich, Subjective Criticism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 285-87.

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